

THIRTY SERMONS,

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

THE

POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF

RICHARD CHALONER COBBE, D.D.

VICAR OF ST. ANN'S; VICAR OF FINLASS;
TREASURER OF ST. PATRICK'S IN THE KINGDOM OF
IRELAND;
NEPHEW AND CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE LATE
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

O X F O R D:

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MDCCXCIII.



T O

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

G E O R G E,

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

MY LORD,

THE honour you have conferred upon me in permitting me to dedicate these Sermons of my deceased Father to your Lordship, claims my most grateful acknowledgments. Your Lordship will perceive that they were never intended to meet the eye of public criticism: they are in the exact state in which they came from his mouth; and display the genuine picture of his manners and his mind. If the perusal of these Discourses afford your Lordship

any pleasure, my end will be fully answered, and I trust every Reader, judicious and candid like your Lordship, will be sure to receive the same entertainment.

I am,

with sincere respect,

my Lord,

your Lordship's dutiful

and obedient servant,

RICHARD CHALONER COBBE.

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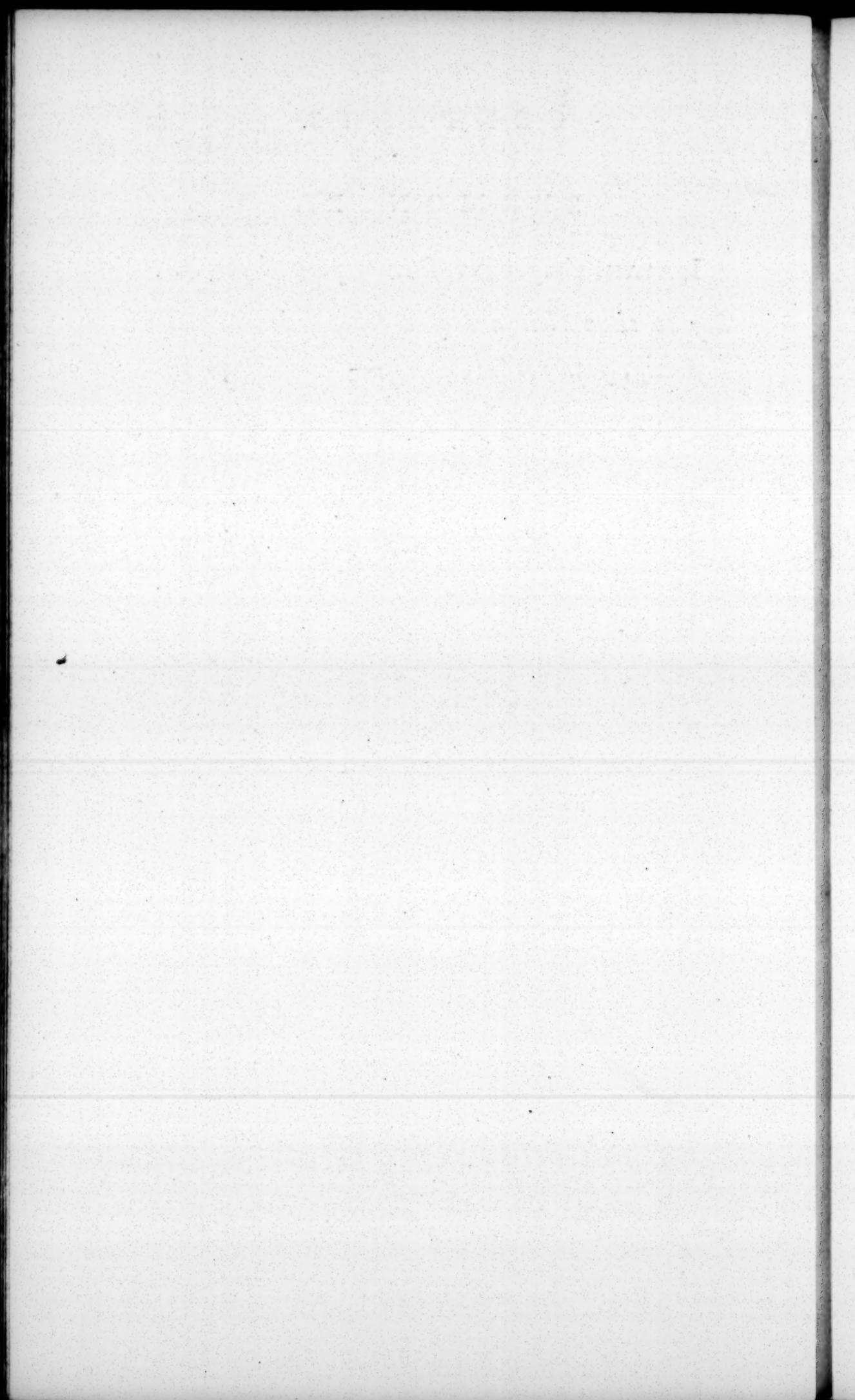
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S E R M O N I.

JEREMIAH, CHAP. III. PART OF THE 25TH VERSE.

*We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us:
For we have sinned against the Lord our God.*

I N these words the prophet Jeremiah gives us a lively description of the repentance of the people of Israel, who had so just a sense of the folly and heinousness of their sins, as filled them with shame and confusion. Shame is one of the strongest passions in human nature; so essential to a true repentance, that it necessarily accompanies it; it being impossible to enter into a sincere resolution of reforming the irregularities of our lives, without we were sensible that they reflected a disgrace upon us, and were a scandal and reproach to human nature. It is such an apprehension as this that will make us look back on our past sins with the utmost horror and detestation, and resolutely withstand all

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future

future temptations which would betray us into the like detestable practices. Virtuous impressions are not easily stamped on a mind which imprudence has steeled against a sense of its errors: but before *that* modesty is shaken off, which the great Author of our Beings hath wisely implanted in us, as the most effectual restraint from the licentious indulgence of our inordinate appetites, there is great hopes of the reformation of mens' morals, if it be but purely out of respect, and reverence to the dignity of their nature, which was formed for the enjoyment of the greatest good, and therefore ought not to be debased with the scandalous pursuit of the most execrable vices. Sin is so contrary to the principles of reason, that men must do violence to themselves before they can commit it without a secret reluctance: their consciences will be loud and clamorous to upbraid them with their guilt, at every serious interval; and terrify them with a lively apprehension of their danger. Such convictions, which nothing but an hardened impudence can stifle and suppress, naturally produce an inward dislike of wicked actions, which is gradually improved into an utter abhorrence of them. So that next to the grace of God, without which we are incapable
of

of performing any of those duties enjoined us by our religion, there is nothing which more effectually leads us to repentance, than the shame, which the Scriptures every where represent, as an inseparable companion of it. The language of all true penitents ought then to be that of the Israelites, in the words of my text: —“*We lye down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God.*” — In discoursing on which words, I shall shew, that sin is shameful.

First, In itself, because of the malignity of its nature.

Secondly, In respect to that God, against whom, and in whose presence, it is committed.

First, Sin is shameful in itself because of the malignity of its nature. — This will appear, if we consider what shame is. A passion arising in us from the consciousness of our having committed some evil action, and which it was in our power to have avoided: that trouble and regret which we feel within ourselves, when we reflect on our voluntary imperfections, and the infamy to which they deservedly expose us. So that, in reality, nothing can be shameful,
but

but what is criminal in itself, or is the consequence of some previous crime we have been guilty of. *Poverty* we have no reason to be ashamed of, or blush at, if we have not brought it on ourselves by our own *idleness and extravagance*: *that misfortune* is so far from being a reproach to our innocence, that providence may have designed it as a trial of our virtue, and to qualify us for the glorious rewards of it. Nor have we any more reason to be ashamed of our *bodily deformities*; since, for the *most part*, it is entirely out of our power either to prevent, or remove them. The regulation of our face and features is not left to our own care and management; if *it were*, what pains would not be taken to rectify a *bad complexion, a misshapen body, or a distorted limb*: nay, how *industrious* are many to hide and palliate *those*, even where their endeavours are so far from concealing them, that they render them the more conspicuous? To be ashamed of any thing of this nature, besides the manifest folly of it, is an impious reflection on the wisdom and goodness of Providence, to whose dispensation we have not learnt to pay a patient and submissive resignation. But though bodily defects reflect *no disgrace*

disgrace on us, we cannot but blush at those *moral defects* in our souls, by which they are as much deformed, as our bodies possibly can be, by the most irregular and disproportionate texture of their several constituent parts. The beauty of the soul consists in the regularity of its appetites and desires; as that of the body results from a just symmetry of its members; so that the beauteous harmony of the one is as much destroyed *by sin*, as that of the other is, by the most *monstrous and unnatural distortions*. Nor is it possible, that the deformity of our souls, should lie *so latent and concealed*, as not to be obvious to the all-seeing Providence; nay, for the *most part*, they lay open enough to the view and censure of mankind: much less can they escape the notice of our own consciences; which, notwithstanding all our vain endeavours to silence their clamorous accusations, will not fail to pass a *true and impartial* judgment on all our actions—set our sins before us in so true a light, that we shall start and shudder at the hideous prospect, and be ashamed of our folly, in having subjected our reason to those inferior faculties, over which God has given us an undoubted sovereignty. Sin disorders

orders all the internal springs of our actions, darkens our understandings, perverts our will, and misguides our affections: such an unnatural state of confusion are we reduced to by the irregularities of our appetites, which are engaged in the pursuit of the *meanest* and most *unworthy* objects, such as bear no proportion to the excellence and dignity of a human soul. The great care and caution wherewith *even* the wicked endeavour to conceal *their* faults, is a strong presumption, that they are conscious of their wickedness. Unwilling that their secret sins should be brought to light, they commonly chuse to commit them in darkness, as if it were their chiefest concern to bury *them* in perpetual oblivion. *They that be drunk*, says the Apostle (1 Theff. c. v. and vii.) *are drunk in the night*, as if it were the properest season for *those* debaucheries, which are not fit to be exposed to the view of the world. Nor is *drunkenness* the only sin that flies the light; the wicked are as solicitous to cast a veil over their other vices, as that of *intemperance*, being fully sensible that infamy and disgrace are the sure effects of them. However deaf to the loud alarms of a *guilty conscience* — however estranged

estranged to their *native modesty*—however ambitious of being thought to *dare the vengeance of Heaven*, by refusing to submit to the restraints—some wretches may appear ; yet notwithstanding the feigned confidence they assume to make the world believe they are inwardly at peace, and entirely satisfied with the present conduct of their lives ;—notwithstanding their carrying it off with that air of *assurance*, which *innocence alone* can inspire, —yet they cannot, when reflecting, but feel all the tormenting perplexities of shame, all the bitter pangs of *anguish* and *remorse*. Such was the opinion of the *Roman Satyrist*, and whoever differs from these sentiments of that wise heathen, must be a great stranger to the consequences of vice, and utterly unacquainted with the frame of human nature. The imputation of folly, man can very ill digest ; but, whatever pretences the sinner may make to wisdom, he ever carries about with him an *undeniable* evidence of a weak understanding, and argues him to be either *destitute of reason*, or to be guilty of a very *gross abuse* of it. Sin and consideration are of all things the most inconsistent ; hence, sin and folly are used as convertible terms in
holy

holy Scripture, and the fool and sinner are *inseparably* joined together. Thus David addressed himself to the Lord, when his heart smote him after he had numbered his people — *I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done foolishly.* (2 Sam. c. xxiv. v. 10.) Thus Aaron acknowledged his fault, when he had seditiously joined with Miriam in reviling Moses: *Alas, my Lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.* God himself expressly tells us, that the stubbornness and disobedience of his people Israel, proceeded from their ignorance and folly, (Deut. xxxii. v. 28, 29.) *They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them: oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter* End! As sin is shameful because of the folly of it, so is it also, as it subjects us to the most abject state of servitude. Under this notion, sin is represented in the scriptures; (Rom. c. vi. v. 17, 18.) *God be thanked, says the Apostle, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine*
which

which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. Liberty, man's boasted privilege, is but an empty name where vice has taken possession; it commands, like a lawless tyrant, and few dare disobey. Whence do you presume, says the wise heathen to the libertine, to call yourself *free*, when so many passions rule over you? Though you have not lost your civil liberty, you are still a slave, and of the two, your servitude is the more insupportable. Thus sin appears to be shameful in itself, as it brings the greatest infamy and reproach with it. I come now, *Secondly*, To shew that it is shameful in respect to that God against whom, and in whose presence, it is committed.—Man never appears to greater advantage, his actions never shine with greater lustre, than when actuated by the principle of *gratitude*: a principle so amiable, the breach of which is a *reproach* to a reasonable creature. The common offices of friendship lay so great an *obligation* on those that receive them, that *ingratitude* seems even to be a contradiction in nature. If then we fear to offend our *friend*, shall we dare to be ungrateful to *Him*, in whom we *live, move, and have our Being?*

Being? Shall *we* transgress the laws of Him to whom we owe all the obligations that can be conferred on us — without *whose protection* and *patronage* we cannot subsist a single moment? Shall we trample on the authority of Him, who hath given us the most sensible demonstrations of his love and tenderness towards us? Can we be capable of making the basest and most unworthy returns for the affectionate expressions of a generous and *undeserved* benevolence? As we ought to be ashamed to sin against God, as he is our greatest Benefactor, so we may consider further, that every sin that we commit is in his presence, and — I tremble to speak it — under his more immediate inspection. — *That God sees all our actions*, is of infinitely greater concern to us, than if they were exposed to the view and censure of mankind: though such is the *modesty*, or *rather folly*, of *vice*, that it shuns the presence of a *virtuous man*, when it dares appear before the *eyes of God*. As God is a Being of *infinite purity* he must be an *irreconcilable* enemy to *vice*, against which he has denounced the *severest penalties*. The case of every sinner is the same with *his*, who is *arrogant enough* to commit a capital crime in the presence

presence of *that judge*, from whom he is to receive his trial and condemnation. (Consider this seriously, and lay it to heart.) *Every action* of our life is to be laid open at *his tribunal*, who has himself been the *witness* of them. If we are not *ashamed* of our sins, when we look on the *day* of judgment under the *disadvantageous circumstances of distance and futurity*; yet we shall most certainly *be so*, when the secrets of all hearts shall be discovered. In that *dreadful day*, when all the *deeds* of darkness shall be brought to light, with all the aggravating circumstances that enhance *their guilt*, how great will be the shame and confusion of those wretches, who now glory in their impiety? Then shall they call in vain on the mountains and rocks to cover them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne. (Rev. c. 6. v. 16.) Then they will feel the sting of an awakened conscience, when it is too late to reform *their miscarriages*, or to avoid the sentence *then* to be pronounced on them—*Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!*—Happy therefore, will our condition be, if whilst *we continue* here, we reflect on our sins with such shame and abhorrence, that we
may

may not (and, I pray God, we may not) hereafter remember them to our eternal confusion. Such a religious shame, accompanied with an *unfeigned* repentance of all our sins, may preserve us from the dreadful effects of them.—*Then* shall we with confidence appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and receive that blessing which our merciful Saviour shall then pronounce to all that *love and fear* him.---*Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.*

That this may be our case, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

S E R M O N I I.

EZEKIEL, CHAP. XVIII. VER. 30.

*Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions,
so iniquity shall not be your ruin.*

IF eternal happiness was to be obtained by a wish, or desire only, if saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, like the foolish virgins in the Gospel, was sufficient to gain admittance into Heaven; who amongst us would ever be excluded? not even the most profligate sinner would scruple or refuse to be at so little pains, was he certain of enjoying a reward much greater than in reason he can deserve. But to perform those duties, (*which God himself requires from us*) so absolutely necessary for the obtaining it, seems so difficult, so laborious a task, that few, or none at all, will undertake. And such is the duty of *repentance*, which upon the account of the many *seeming difficulties* there are in the perform-

performance of it ; it happens that some have resolved wholly to neglect. *But it is to be hoped* that *we* who are *here assembled* have *much better dispositions to religion*, and are *ready to perform its duties*, and *dread being reckoned* in the number of *those* who *hate* to be reformed. *Repentance* is, by the apostle to the Hebrews, *called* one of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, thereby intimating, how necessary it is to lay *such a foundation*, that we might the better go on unto perfection.

There are numberless passages in scripture which fully evidence the importance of this duty, *nay even reason itself*, dictates *thus much* to us, that if we injure our neighbour either by *word or deed*, we think ourselves *obliged to ask pardon*, and manifest our sorrow for the offence. How much *more reasonable is it then*, that we humble ourselves before God, promising a change and amendment of life, whom we every day affront by sinning against him, by *defying his laws, and despising his commandments*. I need not therefore insist on the *reasonableness* of the duty of repentance, *which I hope* will readily be granted ; but shall, in my following discourse, consider what those obstructions are, which

which generally prevent men from performing it; and offer some considerations to engage you to set about it, because those obstructions are not of weight enough to excuse the neglect.

The first obstruction is, that it is supposed to be a duty which requires a great deal of pains and labour, and is very difficult in the performance; indeed thus much we must own, that when a man begins first to combat with his vices, and to withdraw himself from the power of *those sins* he has been a long time *subject* to; there will be some *difficulty in the undertaking*, and what requires a *vigorous resolution* to get the victory. For wheresoever sin is become habitual, it is like a *second nature*, not *easily* rooted out, but sticks as close as the *Ethiopians skin*, or the *leopard's spots*. Hence it is, that the doctrine of repentance meets with so little success, because it seems to oblige us to the performance of a duty loaded with *innumerable difficulties*, and because the *practice of it is disagreeable* to most mens' *viti-ated palates and inclinations*; can the miser, for instance, be persuaded to withdraw his affections from *his darling treasure*, in which his *whole life and soul are wrapt up*, without the
greatest

greatest reluctance? Or can the *man of pleasure* bid adieu to the *vanities* of the world he *so much* delights in, without striving against and subduing his very nature? And this every *habitual* sinner is sensible of, that rather than set about to *reform* his life which he fancies will create *abundance* of trouble, he resolves to continue in his *accustomed* state of *impenitency*. What makes the duty *difficult* arises *purely* from a long indulging ourselves in a vicious course of sinning: so that God can by no means be charged as being a severe task-master for imposing it on us, since it is certain that through our own folly we make it to be such.

The unpleasantness of this duty is commonly urged as another obstruction, which is often apt to deter men from complying readily with the performance. How can I, says the man of pleasure, think of retiring from the world, which by complying to this duty, I must do, and never more gratify my lusts and passions, which are now grown headstrong and unruly, and are importunate with me to be indulged? What recompence can be made me for the loss of that company which hath often cheered me in a melancholy humour, and with whom I
have

have spent my time much to my heart's content. It can by no means be a grateful work to look back upon the past actions with a resolution to detest them, and never again to delight ourselves with them. This work is only fit for men of melancholy tempers, whose palates are grown insipid, and are already dead to the world : men who can no longer be wicked, unless in imagination, and whose faculties fail to exert themselves with their usual vigour.

At this unaccountable rate will some men argue foolishly, from a wrong notion of pleasure ; and imagine, that the unpleasantness of the duty of repentance is a sufficient pretence for their neglect.

True pleasure consists, not as some wildly imagine in gratifying their *brutal lusts and appetites*, but rather in being religious, and in having a conscience always void of offence, both towards God and towards men. Indeed to view a life ill spent, to ransack and pry into the wickedness of the heart, will doubtless cause great uneasiness at the dismal prospect. But this may be a good argument of a sincere penitent, who is touched to the quick, and made sensible of the odiousness of sin, and how very consistent it is with divine justice to inflict a

punishment unless prevented by repentance, and how offensive it is to God, against whom it is committed. This uneasiness of mind is not unlike that of a traveller, who at the first setting out on his journey, is perplexed with the roughness of the way. He meets many obstacles that retard him, and perhaps too at a distance he sees still greater than these already passed, at which his heart faints, and discourages him to proceed. But if he is a man of resolution, and not easily dispirited, he will proceed in hopes the latter end of his journey will prove more pleasant, which will abundantly recompence him for the uneasiness he at first laboured under.

The case is much the same with him who intends to reform his life, who, in order to this end, first reflects and considers what is past: which consideration brings into his mind such horrid ideas as to deter him from proceeding further. But if he proves as resolute as the traveller was supposed to be, he may be assured of having a much better prospect hereafter; and what doth now so much torture him will, by his perseverance in well-doing, be succeeded by something more pleasant, and what will afford him solid and substantial satisfaction. Be-
fides

sides it is certain, that in being religious, and living in obedience to the laws of God, there arises more pleasure than in being wicked, and living in obedience to our own lusts,

The unpleasantness of repentance, which is allowed only to be at first, can be of no weight to hinder us from setting about it. Let a man but make the trial, and I am persuaded that what his fancy represented to him as uncouth and unpleasant, he will upon a nearer view find not so terrible as is too often suggested to encourage impenitency. Let a man, I say but make this trial, and call his own ways to remembrance, the consequence will be as it was with the Royal Psalmist—*to turn his feet unto God's testimonies.*

Another hinderance, (the last I shall mention) is the hopes of long life, which makes men delay their repentance, that when they shall arrive at a good old age, then will they readily offer up their services to God, and willingly put in practice the duties of religion.--- Such a scheme as this is often laid by foolish and inconsiderate men to attain future happiness, but it is to be feared, that they are as often deceived in not obtaining the end of their wishes. For what assurance can we mortals

have that our lives shall be prolonged? Is it not solely in the power of God, in whom we live, move, and have our being, to cut us off in the very midst of our days? This presumption then in us to defer our repentance through the hopes of long life, is abusing the grace and mercy of God, and thereby rendering our future salvation hazardous and uncertain. But alas! how often is the penitent thief on the cross urged as an instance, that a late repentance will be accepted by God, and the enjoyment of Paradise be as certain a reward for it then, as if it had sooner been practiced. This passage of scripture men are generally fond of, and by their hasty inconsiderate comments on it, will draw such doctrine from it as to contradict the whole tenor of the Gospel. But was this instance to be impartially considered, the case would be found widely different between the thief and us. His conversion was plainly miraculous; can we then expect in this age (when miracles cease) that the like shall happen unto any of us? He never before had the knowledge of the Messiah; and upon that conviction he repented. But we from our infancy have made profession of him, and were then baptised into his death, which from that very
time

time laid an obligation on us, that we also should walk in newness of life.

If what has been already said is not sufficient to shew the sinner his folly in delaying his repentance, in hopes of living long ; let him consider how very short the lives of men generally are, who bring their years to an end, as it were a tale that is told, which is an instance to represent the shortness of their duration. Let him consider, that his thread of life may be cut off the very moment he actually sins, then is that design entirely frustrated ; what a risque then doth he run of being for ever miserable, only for the enjoyment of a momentary pleasure ; and how fully evident is it to us that to delay our repentance on any pretence whatever, is greatly to hazard our future happiness. I shall therefore offer some considerations to persuade you to set about it ; because it is evident those obstructions just now mentioned, are not of weight sufficient to excuse the neglect of this important duty. Let the consideration of the gracious calls and invitations of God to repentance mentioned almost in every page of the Bible, move and affect us.

Repent

Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

I have no pleasure in the death him that dieth saith the Lord God, wherefore, turn yourselves and live ye.

Again wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil—learn to do well. Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool.

Our blessed Saviour, at his entrance on his prophetick office, went out and preached, that men should repent, saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Hereby intimating, that without repentance and reformation of life, none could be fit hearers of the doctrine he came to teach, or become real and true disciples. How instant are the Apostles, who were men influenced by the Spirit of God, to exhort us to purity and holiness by forsaking every evil way. That we put off concerning the former conversation—the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed

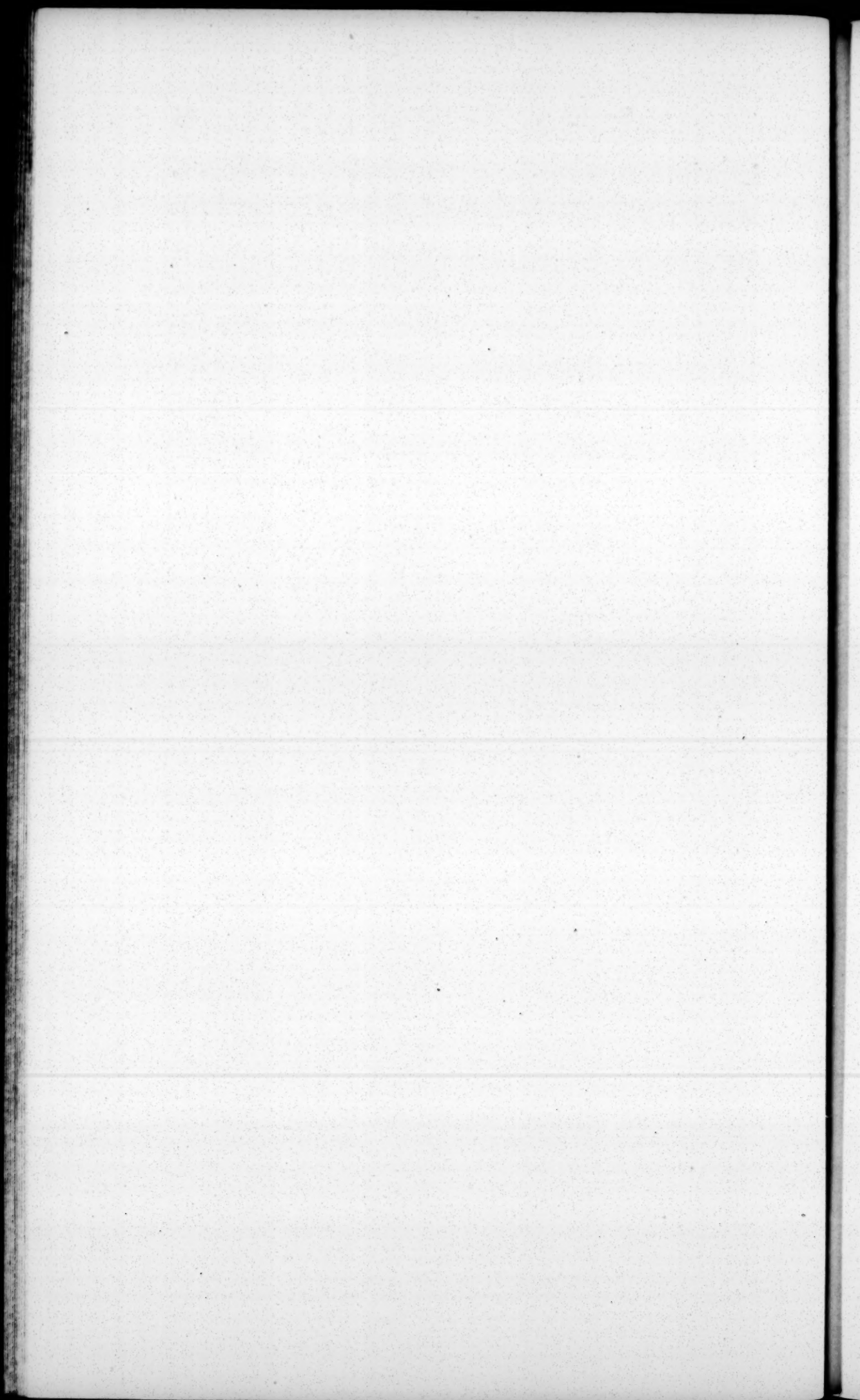
renewed in the spirit of our minds: and that we put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

These few passages that I have mentioned, if duly weighed and considered as they ought, would not fail to make a deep impression on our hearts, since it is the voice of God we hear, that so loudly calls, and so kindly invites us to repentance. This should encourage us immediately to set about it, and should convince us of its importance. Besides the frame and composition of human bodies may convince us that are at present careless and remiss in our duty, that we may be suddenly attacked by a fit of sickness; and then what condition are we in to make up our account with God, who are then racked and tortured with the pains of our distemper; who are then, perhaps, so very sensible of our afflictions as to be past feeling the pangs of a tortured conscience. What season is this for calling ourselves to an account? certainly the most improper, and which a wise considerate man would never choose. Let us therefore be persuaded to lay hold on the present opportunity, and let us hasten to work out our salvation, lest the night overtake us in which no man can work. Consider that an early re-
pentance

penitance is sure to render the ensuing part of our lives full of peace and comfort, and is a means of reconciling God to us. The troubled sea, which the wicked are represented by, becomes calm ; we shall no more be troubled with doubts and fears which those that continue in wickedness are ever subject to ; neither will our consciences, whose guilt is removed by a hearty and sincere sorrow for our transgressions, ever terrify or condemn us. The thoughts of death will never discompose one who has already made up his accounts, but will rather yield unspeakable pleasure and comfort to him, as it will be the time for his entering into the joy of his Lord ; let the consideration of a future judgment in the other world be of force to persuade us : for if men be unwilling to judge and censure themselves here for their wicked actions, yet the time will come when we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and be summoned before the Judge of all the Earth, who will then pass sentence upon us according to our deserts ; leaving no hopes of a future reconciliation to them that have lived ungodly. No possibility of a pardon will there then be ; which is to be sued for and obtained only whilst we are in the flesh and continue here. Eternal happiness

happinefs is propofed as a reward for obedience, which thofe that have lived godly in Jefus Chrift will, at the laft day, be entitled to; but to the ungodly, eternal mifery will be as a punifhment for their difobedience. Let us not therefore delay to put ourfelves in a condition to hope for the *one*, by being fincerely penitent; that fo we may live and die, without fearing the other. — If what has here been urged is both agreeable to fcripture and reafon, let us not then hinder its having a due effect upon our lives. Let us this very moment refolve to forfake our fins, and become entirely new creatures and good Chriftians. And let us addrefs ourfelves to Almighty God, with humble, lowly, and penitent hearts; that it may pleafe him to give us true repentance; to forgive us all our fins, negligences and ignorances, and to endue us with the grace of his holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to his holy word.

That this may be our cafe, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jefus Chrift our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghof, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.



S E R M O N III.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. II. VER. 32.

A LIGHT TO LIGHTEN THE GENTILES.

THOUGH the Jewish nation was so highly favoured by God above all others, in that the *Messiah* was to descend from one of their tribes ; yet was he not to be born, as they vainly imagined, for them alone, but for the universal benefit of mankind. In him should they all be blessed, all see and feel the *salvation of God*. A great, a glorious work ! highly worthy the great Lover of Souls ! thus to take compassion on a miserably-dark, benighted part of the world, and to cause a *Light to spring up* on them *who sat in darkness*—a *darkness which might be felt* : a darkness, far more uncomfortable than that to which mankind is so naturally averse : for it was a darkness drawn over the understanding of men ; it affected their better part, the noblest faculty of the soul. Their
reason

reason was clouded with so thick a veil of ignorance and error, that their intellectual state resembled that of the first chaos, when *the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*

A view of the wretched state of the Gentile world before the coming of Christ, will naturally evince the greatness of God's mercy, and the obligations it brings with it.

Their first and great fundamental error was concerning the true God. Their notions on this subject were so contrary and inconsistent, that a diligent perusal of them cannot but produce this useful reflection, how poor, how abject the mind of man is, when it attempts to comprehend divine truths. The world was divided into two extremes: they were either for many gods, or none at all:—opinions almost as remote from truth, as from one another.

We have an epitome of the grossest and foulest superstition the world ever knew in that one people the Ægyptians. Nothing can be more ridiculous than what the best writers tell us of their gods, and of their religious rites: and in their story we see, in effect, the religions of all
other

other nations. Ægypt was the great nursery of superstition ; from thence arose that *thick darkness*, which afterwards overspread the earth : not that this darkness was every where uniformly spread ; as soon as it began to be diffused, it was divided and broken into unequal parts, insensibly altered as it went along, and received different additions, according to the several climates to which it came. By which means their religion by degrees differed from one another, but not less from reason. What truth tradition had handed down to them, was by length of time, and frequent transplanting, so altered and defaced, that very little of the genuine parts remained, and the old lines were, in a manner, gone. Hence, nothing was so absurd to which they did not give credit. And hence they became an easy prey to a few, who thought further than the rest, who, through policy or interest, nourished their superstitions, and kept them in subjection. There were, doubtless, some wise and honest men, who saw through, and might have corrected their absurdities ; but, probably, a dread of the consequences of an alteration, on the one hand, prevented their exposing them ; and the uncertainty of finding out the truth, on the other, made them rest

con-

contented with them. In time, indeed, many of them ventured to refine a little, and by degrees, endeavoured to explain away what was most apparently ridiculous ; but this did not satisfy some of more heat and less discretion, who from an implicit belief of the grossest superstitions, ran instantly into the other extreme ; and so at first *scepticism*, then atheism, became the learning and wisdom of the world. These men, finding the world had been mistaken in many things, began to doubt of every thing. Unable to extract the little truth that lay concealed under their corrupt opinions, they, without distinction, threw all away, and set up new opinions of their own, very different from what had been received, but not less extravagant : Thus leaving the world in a far worse condition than they found it ; as it is better to act on wrong principles, than none at all. Men may be governed by those who are wiser than themselves ; but men of no principles can neither be governed by themselves or others.

Some of the chief points, on which the world, when they began to think freely, were employed, were these :—the Being of a God, his Nature, and Attributes ; the origin of Evil, the Creation of the World, the Providence of God,

God, the Immortality of the Soul ; and a future state of Rewards and Punishments. Questions like these of great importance, and about which the wisest heathens could come to no certain conclusions. In some of their writings, indeed, there appears a most extraordinary sublimity of sentiment, and resemblance of truth ; but on examination, they seem to have expressed their wishes for what may be true, rather than the certainty of it. The most striking instance of this is, that excellent discourse of Socrates before his death. In his astonishing observations on the Immortality of the Soul, and future state of Rewards and Punishments, who can without pity see the weak efforts of the best reason ? We see him through the whole piece earnest in the pursuit of truth ; and cannot but feel a kind of melancholy pleasure at the repeated, yet disappointed attempts of so eager, so aspiring an imagination. The discourse, at first sight, is extremely beautiful ; but if we view the picture nicely, examine the several parts of it, the proportions and reasons on which they are built, the whole will appear such a strange mixture of truth and error, such an heap of inconclusive arguments, that one
cannot

cannot but be astonished at such a production from the hand of so great a master.

Such were the blindness and ignorance of the world in matters of the greatest moment; nor were their morals less corrupt than their opinions. A wretched, comfortless, and wicked world! and in this sad state, without redress, had not the Messiah, in the fullness of time, been revealed to them. *In him the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined,* He dispelled the clouds which had so long hung over the earth; he enlightened the world after this long and universal darkness, this black and dreary night.

On the appearance of Christ, a new and totally different state of things was introduced. All necessary knowledge of divine things was communicated to the world, the nature of God, and themselves; just and true notions of the divine Providence, of his wisdom and goodness in governing the world, in laying down the most excellent rules for our conduct, in teaching us the true nature of moral good and evil, and in giving us a reasonable worship, worthy of man, and in some sort, worthy his Creator.

We

We are now directed by the highest reason of the best Being, by the divine and infallible guidance of the Son of God. Rewards await our obedience, and punishments the neglect of our duty. No assistance is wanting to us, for he hath graciously promised his holy Spirit to *all them that call upon him.*

Had not the Messiah been revealed at all, the world would still have lain in sin and darkness; had he been revealed in the manner the Jews expected, then indeed he had *been a Light to the Gentiles*, but a Light dreadful and terrible, to burn up and destroy the nations who would not submit their necks to the Jewish yoke. To the Jews it would have been matter of real joy; the rest of the world would have had little reason to join with them: their portion would have been to lament themselves, and their hard fortune: their sorrow would have risen with the calamities this state of things would have reduced them to; and both would have increased in proportion to the prosperity and joy of this little people, who, confined to a narrow corner of the world, now made no figure, were no terror to their neighbours, but lived to themselves, despising and despised.

But, thanks be to God, this is not the case. The expectations of the Jews are so far from being fulfilled, that the very reverse is come to pass. They are so far from being the only people whom the Lord hath redeemed, so far from engrossing the blessings of the Messiah to themselves, that they are almost the only nation that has had no part in them. *For God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see : they stumbled, they fell ; and through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles. —* So great is the goodness and severity of God ; on them which fell, severity ; but goodness towards us. His severity, indeed, is by no means matter of joy to a good man ; far be such thoughts from us : we ought rather to pity their unhappiness, and pray for the time when God will have mercy on his antient people. His undeserved and unexpected favours should teach us to set a proper value on his goodness : favours not granted in common with his own favourite people ; but, what is much more astonishing, *they had no share in them ; the casting them away was the reconciling of the world.*

How truly thankful ought we to be for this inestimable goodness of God to us ! How careful not to undervalue it, as some modern philosophers

fophers do, who, by a strange ingratitude, because God hath suffered them to enjoy the light, conclude there was no darkness, and that the world would have been sufficiently enlightened without this assistance of the Almighty. They deny the necessity of revelation, and bring down the sublime doctrine of revealed religion to that which they call *natural*. From the very light which revealed religion has given them, they affect to argue against it; and produce as the effect of their own unassisted reason, what was really borrowed from revelation. They distinguish not between reason with, or without, the aids of scripture; things in themselves as different, as to invent a truth, and to assent to it when once found out. As well might man say he could move with as much regularity in darkness as in light, because he has always the power of motion. Let such reasoners look back into the histories of the earlier ages; read the best discourses of the ablest men; men no way inferior to them in natural abilities; men of greater industry, closer attention, and more virtue: in their essays let them learn what *vague* conclusions unassisted reason was able to make in her enquiry about God, Religion, Liberty, Morality, a future Judgment, and Immortality.

There is great reason to imagine, that they who contend for *natural* religion, contend not for its own sake, but to destroy that which is revealed, and thence easily arrive at their darling conclusion, that there is no religion at all.

But we have not so learned Christ. We see and know the great things he hath done for us : that he is the true light, and that before he came the world was in darkness. He is the great restorer and deliverer of mankind from that blindness and ignorance to which the degeneracy of their nature had reduced them. He formed anew, as it were, this part of the creation, and gave again to man an understanding heart. He stamped again upon him the image of his maker ; that image, on which the dominion of man over the rest of the creation was at first founded. He hath once more made him a little lower than the angels ; he hath crowned him with honour and immortality, which is again brought to light by the Gospel of his Son.—*This is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes.* For this should we *shew forth his praise.* It is as impossible to have a sense of these favours, and not be thankful, as it is for those to be thankful who have not a sense of them.

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The natural consequence of what God has done for us is, to *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but to walk as the children of the light*. The times of darkness were the times of ignorance, and therefore God winked at, or overlooked them; but now, since the light of the Gospel is shed abroad, he *commands all men every where to repent*. Our duty rises in proportion to the means God has furnished us with for the performance of it. In return for great favours, great duties become due from us. If we would receive advantage from the light, we must study to deserve it. God did not give us this light to *glory in our shame*, or to triumph in the abuse of his grace, by daring to produce those monsters into open day, which before were shrouded under the cover of darkness. No; what was then excusable is now no longer so. To prefer the absurd pleasures of sin to the beauty and comeliness of virtue, argues the want of common sense, as well as common gratitude, for the favours God has bestowed on us for far different purposes. We are not now to distinguish our time, as Christians, into light and darkness, and imagine we have the night to revel in: the darkness now will not cover us; *the darkness is*

no darknes to us ; the light is as clear as the day ; the darknes and light to us are both alike. For since the sun of righteousness is risen ; since He that was in the beginning light, eternal light, is come down among us, and become the light of men, our city, like that of the New Jerusalem, has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

To whom, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, now and for ever.

S E R M O N I V .

ST. LUKE, CHAP. XIII. LATTER PART OF VER. 7.

Cut it down—why cumbereth it the ground?

THESE words are spoken of the barren Fig-tree—under the parable of which, our blessed Lord sets forth to us the nature and disposition of the ungodly, with the end and consequence of such behaviour. He compares himself to the dresser of a vineyard ; and by that vineyard denotes the world he came to cultivate and reform. The barren Fig-tree is a resemblance of those, who, having the advantages of being instructed in the true religion, and the means of improving in virtue and holiness, are altogether unproductive of good works, and bring not forth fruits meet for repentance.

The whole parable naturally invites us to consider,

First, The goodness of God in giving us the Gospel for the direction of our lives and practices.

Secondly, The certain destruction of those, who refuse to be conducted by so excellent and unerring a rule.

Thirdly, The great forbearance and long-suffering of God in graciously waiting for our reformation and amendment.

The goodness of God in giving us the Gospel for the direction of our lives and practices, will most eminently appear, if we reflect on the general corruption of mankind, and the wretched estate of the world at the time of our blessed Saviour's appearance in it. And though the Gospel was rejected with scorn and contempt, *as a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness*, yet it came to offer the greatest kindness and mercy to both, by the mediation of that Christ, who was really the *power and the wisdom of God*. The Gentiles, far the greatest part of the world, stood in vast need of our Saviour's light to lighten them; nor did the Jews less want the Messiah to be the glory of his people Israel. These rested in the mere shadow of religion without any regard
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to the substance of it: they thought, that if the ceremonies of their law were nicely observed, they then acquitted themselves properly, and, in a manner, merited the favour of being styled *the peculiar people of God*: morality was but little in their thoughts, and less in their practice. How insufficient a way this, to render them acceptable in the sight of God! Their rituals, how unsuitable to the excellency of the divine nature, or, indeed, of their own! In these there was no intrinsic goodness; and their own prophets fully declared to them, *that God required something better at their hands.*

Hence, our blessed Lord condemns the supercilious hypocrisy, and formal pretensions to sanctity, so apparent in the Scribes and Pharisees. Their paying tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, was by him utterly disregarded, while they omitted the more important and weighty matters of judgment, mercy, and faith. But was he sent only to *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*? No; though he came primarily to them, as to *those of his own kindred and his own house*; yet his good-will towards men was not shut up in the narrow bounds of Judea, but his knowledge of salvation was designed to go out into all lands, and his word unto the end of
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the world. For the unhappy Gentiles had long sat in darkness, and the shadow of death, till he came to guide their feet into the way of peace. So far were they corrupted in their religious notions, that they had greatly lost themselves both in principle and practice; running into gross idolatry; being given up to a reprobate mind; and thus debasing both God and themselves. Thus, says the Apostle, when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. When the proud and arrogant doctors of the Jews, and the more vain and stiff-necked philosophers among the *Heathen*, neither reformed the world, nor themselves; the former in love with mere show and ostentation, and the latter with dark and obscure speculations, then did the Messiah come to declare, in a plain and unaffected way, the true means of attaining eternal happiness—by faith and repentance—by obeying the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. What amazing love was this! Our blessed Saviour, though he was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; though he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet did he condescend so low as to leave the glories of heaven, where

where angels were obedient unto him, and to appear under the dark and mean cloud of human flesh, on purpose to live among us for our instruction and example, and at last to lay down his life for the redemption of our souls, and the expiation of our sins. He came in the utmost love and charity to save a miserable world, but disdained a kingdom in it. His design was to *minister, and not to be ministered unto; but to lay down his life a ransom for many.*

When we consider then, and seriously reflect with ourselves, we cannot but call to mind *what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.* Has so much care been taken by a kind and merciful Creator, to make us good and virtuous? our improvement will undoubtedly be expected; and we must exert all the powers and faculties of the soul, in endeavouring that it may, in some measure, be answerable to the advantages received. *Where much is given, much will be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* Which brings me,

Secondly, To consider the certain ruin and destruction of those who enjoy the advantage of the gospel, and yet refuse to be conducted by so excellent and unerring a rule.

And

And indeed, what excuse can we have for our sins, if, after we have received the clearest and most rational precepts, urged and enforced by the highest and most prevalent motives, we obstinately continue and persevere in them? *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?* If the blessed Jesus had not delivered to us the most excellent doctrine that ever man did, we had not been so blameable as now. *If, says he, with reference to the Jews, I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin;* that is, “their sin had not been so great, nor would it have been charged upon them with such severity of condemnation.” Had we been in darkness, it could not have been expected that we should have walked so uprightly; but now *that the light hath shined in darkness; the true light that enlightens every one that cometh into the world;* now since the *Son of God is manifested to destroy the works of the devil,* and turn man from sin unto God, we can have no plea to excuse or extenuate our faults; but God *commands all men every where to repent.* Now we see the right path; and if we still go astray, and let every gaudy flower tempt and mislead us, no doubt *but our sin remaineth.* Not that we are to understand this,
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as if every little error was unpardonable ; no : God is merciful : *He knoweth whereof we are made ; he remembereth we are but dust ;* therefore he pardons our infirmities, and accepts of our sincere, though imperfect endeavours. But then this is no pretence for wilful and presumptuous offences ; this is falling short of our abilities, and ill does it become those who *name the name of Christ, departing from iniquity.* To depart from evil is our indispensable duty, otherwise the profession of the Christian religion does but aggravate and enhance our condemnation. There can be no greater reproach cast upon Almighty God, than to imagine that he would give us a license to persist in wickedness, or dispense with the obligations of moral virtue. This is contrary to the Gospel, as well as our reason. His most excellent and divine sermon on the mount is the most convincing proof that he was far from abolishing, or throwing aside morality. *Think not,* says he, *that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* He came to advance the practice of piety and true religion, to deliver it in its pure and genuine beauty, free from the insignificant paint and false glosses of
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mere outside show, of airy, and so much-admired empty speculations. He came to shew the world plain and unaffected truths; and was, as he terms himself, *the way, the truth, and the life*. His doctrines were easy to be understood, and fit to be practised, by all mankind. Unsuitable as they were to nice curiosity, yet would they render the *meanest wise unto salvation*. And as his instructions were so manifestly rational, so he was a living example of the truths he taught; by which he demonstrated, that he proposed nothing to the world which was inconsistent with human nature, absurd or impracticable. Since this is the case, do we, thoughtless creatures, imagine that there is not a suitable return required on our part? or, that all these favours were bestowed upon us for no other end but to be slighted and disregarded? Certainly such unmanly thoughts can never lodge in the breasts of any, into whom God *hath breathed the breath of life*. But to come up to the parable — God Almighty may justly exhortate with us in the words of the prophet: *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,*

grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And to carry on the parable; we should do well to consider the consequence of our unfruitfulness in good works: *I will tell you, says God, what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be trodden down.* Thus did God threaten the perverse Jews; and this denunciation of utter destruction of the ungodly will appear more just, if we consider —

Thirdly, The great forbearance and long suffering of God, in graciously waiting for our reformation and amendment. How often do we offend against the clearest light, and convictions of conscience, and after the most solemn resolutions of amendment! And yet God is so merciful, as not *to suffer his whole displeasure to arise.* But we must not vainly imagine, that he will always strive with man. The wilfully vicious wretch, whom the goodness of God cannot lead to repentance, cannot but meet the just reward of his vices. If we have not lost all sense of gratitude, and of the just right of obedience, which he that made us may claim at our hands, certainly the forbearance and mercy of God must have a deep influence

influence on our minds, and make *us press forward toward the mark of our high calling*. His laws are just and good ; and the obeying them is the means of our greatest happiness. God's happiness is not increased by our virtues, or diminished by our vices : to suppose this, is contradictorally to make infinite perfection precarious and dependant. Yet how graciously is God pleased to condescend to our infirmities, to take upon him the compassion and affections of a father, to endear us to that which is good ! How earnestly does our blessed Saviour intreat the world not to neglect so kind a call, so gracious an invitation ! *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. And lest the spirit of the humble should despair of acceptance, upon consideration of their manifold sins, how lovingly does God revive their fainting and languishing spirits, by declaring their pardon on their repentance and reformation ! *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*. He, like an indulgent father, loves the souls of men with the greatest tenderness imaginable,
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or he had not sent his son from Heaven, partaker of the same happiness with him, to live an afflicted life, and die a shameful death, in order to redeem them, and make them again capable of the favour of God and eternal happiness. What can be done more for us, unless we expect that God, inverting the order of nature, and destroying our free agency, should *force* us to be happy whether we will or no? To incite us to our duty we have the strongest motives, if we have any regard to the goodness of God, or any dread of his future anger: he spares us after our numerous provocations: with the Lord of the vineyard he may say, *I come not these three years, but it may be many more, seeking the fruit of good works; but these barren fig-trees will yield me none.* What then can we expect, but the sentence in the parable, *Cut them down—why cumber they the ground?* But then our blessed Saviour, the good dresser of the vineyard, pleads in our behalf: *Lord, let the barren fig-tree alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.* We are exhorted daily to amendment; but if, after all, we will harden our hearts, it

may be said in the words of the Prophet, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself*. Our ruin is wholly owing to our own obstinacy. But why will ye die, O house of Israel? So far is the Father of mercies and God of all consolation from being pleased with the misery of any creature which he hath made; and so far from willingly leaving them in a condition of impenitence, that he hath made it the main design of the holy scriptures to be a rule whereby they should (when they have transgressed) recall them from their wanderings. To convince us of this comfortable truth, with what tenderness of expression does he entice us to repentance! *Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation: can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Yet will I not forget thee. O that they were wise, that they understood this! that they would consider their latter end!* Thus did God by his Prophets speak to finners under the law; and doth he not by his Son speak as tenderly under the gospel? *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children,*

children, even as an hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not? O that thou hadst known (that is in effect, I would to God that thou wouldest consider), *at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!* What a tenderness of expression is here used by an injured God to a provoking people! From all which instances it is plain, how much God desires the repentance of a sinner, and how much he is grieved by the obstinate refusal of the grace that he offers him.

To conclude—So long as we live, a door of happiness is opened to us by the divine forbearance and long suffering, which is always inviting us to come to him, and, when we come in sincerity, always ready to receive us. But this gives us no encouragement to defer our repentance: for since our life is but *as a span* long, and we have not grace in our own disposal, this very day is not too soon, because to-morrow may be too late. Our weakness, we hope, will be matter of God's pity; let us not then be so wilful as to defy his indignation; not so resolutely wilful as to be stubble to his *fury*; for *our God is a consuming fire*. Let us repent, while we have the grace; and let us immedi-

ately repent, while we have the time. Let us begin this repentance with an ingenuous confession of all our sins; attended with an hatred, as well as sorrow. Proceed we yet farther to a complete satisfaction of every man whom we have injured; breaking off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor. Pass we forward to an impartial and universal reformation of all our lives; and let us not make a full stop there, but let us pray that we may endeavour, and endeavour whilst we pray, that we may grow from strength to strength, from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, until we come unto perfect men, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant; to whom be ascribed all honour and glory, now and for ever.

S E R M O N V.

PSALM CXXXI. VER. 1.

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

HOLY David being in this Psalm about to recommend the great virtue of Humility, that he might draw it in the most lively colours, and enforce it with better advantage, chooses to appeal to his own conduct, to shew how fair he bid for the character of an humble man. And this he does (not so much taking an opportunity of speaking in his own behalf and descanting on his worth, which would have destroyed the virtue he was talking of, as) to express the great desire he had of approving his behaviour, in this part, to God, to whom the account before us is directed; and to leave a lasting example of the mean opinion, which one who was reputed then

the greatest and best of men had of himself. Such men's actions have always a powerful influence on others. It puts the stiffness and arrogance of those below them quite out of countenance, and makes them ashamed to assume, when they see majesty itself content to be lowly in its own eyes.—*Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.*

In which words are contained several instances of the Psalmist's humility. His heart was not haughty. Though he had so much power, riches and glory, though he had found so many signal and wonderful deliverances, though he had so great a share of piety and divine wisdom, yet was not his heart lifted up so as to forget that it was all owing to God's goodness, or to imagine that any thing of it belonged to him but only the honour of enjoying, and being thankful for it. His heart lay quiet and calm, not elated with any little insolent joy, or applause of itself, but rather blushed and was amazed that such prodigious benefits should be heaped on one so unworthy. It forgot not the uncertainty of all outward greatness. He had too often been used to and exercised by the changes and difficulties of
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this life, to put any considerable trust in, or promise himself much lasting happiness from any thing in it.

He had not with the Pharisee, by overlooking or flattering himself in his sins, or by making himself virtues, contracted such a morose superciliousness as not only to plead and boast of his righteousness, but to despise and vilify all about him. This sort of men see not their own faults; but then why so quicksighted in spying out other people's? Because they are full of themselves, and so eager in pursuit of praise and preference, that nothing is to be taken into the account but what serves that purpose; therefore they are impatient of contradiction and reproof, as arguing them guilty of a weakness which they scarce dare know themselves, much less own to the world that they are subject to. But the holy Psalmist knew himself much better; he had with penitential tears often watered his couch, tears flowing from a broken and contrite heart; he had sat in sackcloth and ashes, with horror surveyed, and in the bitterness of his soul lamented his transgressions. This kept him under, was a continual awe to his mind, to defeat every ambitious imagination, and chastise every proud thought.

This debased himself, and raised others in his opinion. *I am a worm, says he, and no man, the very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people; and again, I have been as it were a beast before thee.*

This disposed him to be very sensible of the divine judgments, afraid of, and easily moved by them to repent. *The fear of thee hath undone me. From my youth up thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind.* My heart standeth in awe of thy word, that is, reveres thy commands, is tenderly affected with all thy admonitions, pliant to every reasonable suggestion, soon convinced of the error of its ways, and ready to forsake it. This is part of the character of the humble and contrite which God himself hath given, *that trembleth at my word.* Contrary to this are those who harden themselves against the judgments of Heaven; who either obstinately and securely neglect the motions of God's goodness, or insultingly despise the threatenings of his justice.

Now this humble temper of mind which we have observed in the Psalmist is to be attained —

By judging rightly of things, not according to their appearance, but their intrinsic worth. 'Tis
a hasty

a haſty and ill-weighed reſolution, 'tis a groſs impoſition on our underſtanding, that betrays us into a fondneſs and vanity for thoſe things, which, if conſidered as they ought to be, they will be found not to deſerve; and we ſhould bluſh to be ſo eager in getting, and ſo proud of them when gotten, which have but little more than our own conceit to recommend them. Let us take away this, and they will appear naked and contemptible; let us leſſen our good opinion of them, and they will loſe their excellency, and we ſhall no longer think it worth our while to value ourſelves upon ſuch ſhallow advantages, or to envy others who have them.

If a man would have the patience and take the pains to ſift himſelf thoroughly, he would find ignorance, follies and failings enough of his own to mortify and check his pride, to keep him employed and buſy in amending them, ſo as to have but little leiſure to look out other men's, and leſs reaſon to boaſt of his own excellence. This would make him not ſo tenacious of his own opinion, but ready to think that he may be miſtaken, and others in the right; to pity not inſult their prejudices, becauſe he is always ſenſible of his own; to conſider himſelf under every view as a dependent, fallible, ſinful creature, as having
nothing

nothing but what he hath received, as holding his life, and all he calls himself master of, by mere favour and grace.

But what will still be of greater weight in making us humble of heart, is a due reflection on God, and our condition with respect to him. When we turn our eyes into our own bosoms, we can discover our sins, 'tis true, and may find arguments against our vanity; but then there is something very uneasy and disagreeable in the thing itself; we cannot help comparing our case with that of others, and find some deceitful refreshment and support for our sinking pride, by observing that many are more sinful and miserable than ourselves.

Let us reflect, that God is from all eternity a most infinitely perfect and incomprehensible Being; and what can our little services add to him, whom yet it is our whole business to serve? or wherein can we profit the Most High? If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied against him, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thy hand? The vast body of created beings, if compared to him, are but as the drop of water and the small dust of the balance; and what
must

must each of us, so pitiful a part of the universe, be unto him? He only is good who filleth all things living with plenteousness, He only is wise who ordereth all things according to his pleasure, He only is great who manageth the whole world, and dwelleth in light not to be approached unto. If I speak of strength, says Job, lo! he is strong; and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. In heaven, where the spirits are far more blessed and glorious than we, where they have the fullest and most perfect vision of the Deity, the Lord only is exalted; they cover their faces, fall down low at his footstool and obey; and though we see him not on earth, yet we are sure 'tis filled with his Majesty, and that without him we cannot live, move, or have our being.

If he should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, how shall we abide it? Prejudiced as we are in our own favour, and blind to our failings, though our memories are treacherous, and our hearts perverse, yet can we easily recount many notorious instances of our disobedience; we can point out almost innumerable favours which
we

we have received from God, and these so many instances of our baseness and ingratitude who have abused them : but what are these to the many more we have forgotten and overlooked ? What are these to them that are registered in the divine Omniscience ? What is our imperfect judgment of ourselves to that which will be passed upon us at the heavenly tribunal ?

From hence it plainly follows, that pride was not made for man, nor furious anger for them that are born of a woman. For, says the wise son of Sirach, the beginning of pride is, when one departeth from God, and his heart is turned away from his Maker.

In God's immutable glory and happiness is best seen man's poor dependance and uncertain state, that his life and all outward possessions may in a moment be taken from him, and why should he plume himself so much upon them ? Virtue and piety may indeed make him immortal, but that is the free gift of God ; and should man grow insolent for that ?

In God's sufficiency, he sees that he can do nothing but by him ; in his justice, that he is under condemnation for sin ; and in his mercy, that he cannot live without it. So that whoever

ever hath an haughty heart under these circumstances is, it is plain, a stranger both to God and himself.

To proceed then with the Psalmist's account of himself: mine eyes, says he, are not lofty. That is, he so managed his outward behaviour as to express by it the inward sense he always had of his unworthiness. The looks and gestures are most commonly true interpreters of the heart; and he who once fancies himself to be a very excellent person, will scarce forbear letting the world know it even by his carriage. On the contrary, the humble man desires that his mind and body should be all of a piece, modest and composed, as little inclined as possible to any thing that may look like vanity or self-conceit. He would abhor it in himself, and dislike it in others.

Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. That is, he confined himself strictly within those bounds which God's providence appointed him, and religiously conformed to all the dictates of his will; was not puffed up with vain projects of his own, but adhered strictly to the line of his duty and real interest. From hence we may learn,

That

That it is a part of humility for a man to be content with the condition allotted him; whatever it may be, it is still better than he deserves: to be satisfied with that portion of strength and wisdom which we have, and get such a just measure of both as to know what we can do, and what not, and apply ourselves accordingly to that which is suitable to our capacities. And indeed thus to be humble is the way to be truly great, and to improve our talents to a good advantage: whereas to pursue the wild dreams of vanity and ambition is so far from helping us forward, that it generally makes us lose what we had. For shame, destruction, and contention, are the best companions which Solomon will allow to pride.

Surely, says the Psalmist, in the verse immediately after the text, I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child. As if he had directly pointed out the condition which our Saviour requires of those who come to be his disciples. Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; thereby giving us a pattern of innocence, to shew
us

us our weakness and entire dependance on God, as for our natural, so likewise for our spiritual food. The counsels of God, his nature, and wonderful works, are things beyond the comprehension of man; but holiness, purity, godliness, and virtue, these belong to us, and herein we may day and night exercise ourselves with pleasure and profit.

It is dangerous to affect things above our abilities. The proud man is always busied in airy speculations; passing his judgment in matters he does not comprehend; undertaking business he is not able to perform; and all out of a vain opinion he has conceived of his own parts and abilities. This nation is much pestered with these self-conceited men, who take upon them to erect new schemes and systems of religion, arrogantly presuming to interpret the most hard and obscure places of Scripture, and unfold the most knotty and difficult points of our faith; boldly disputing the eternity of the Son of God, and impiously denying the divinity of their Saviour; setting themselves up to be teachers of the law, when they understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

And

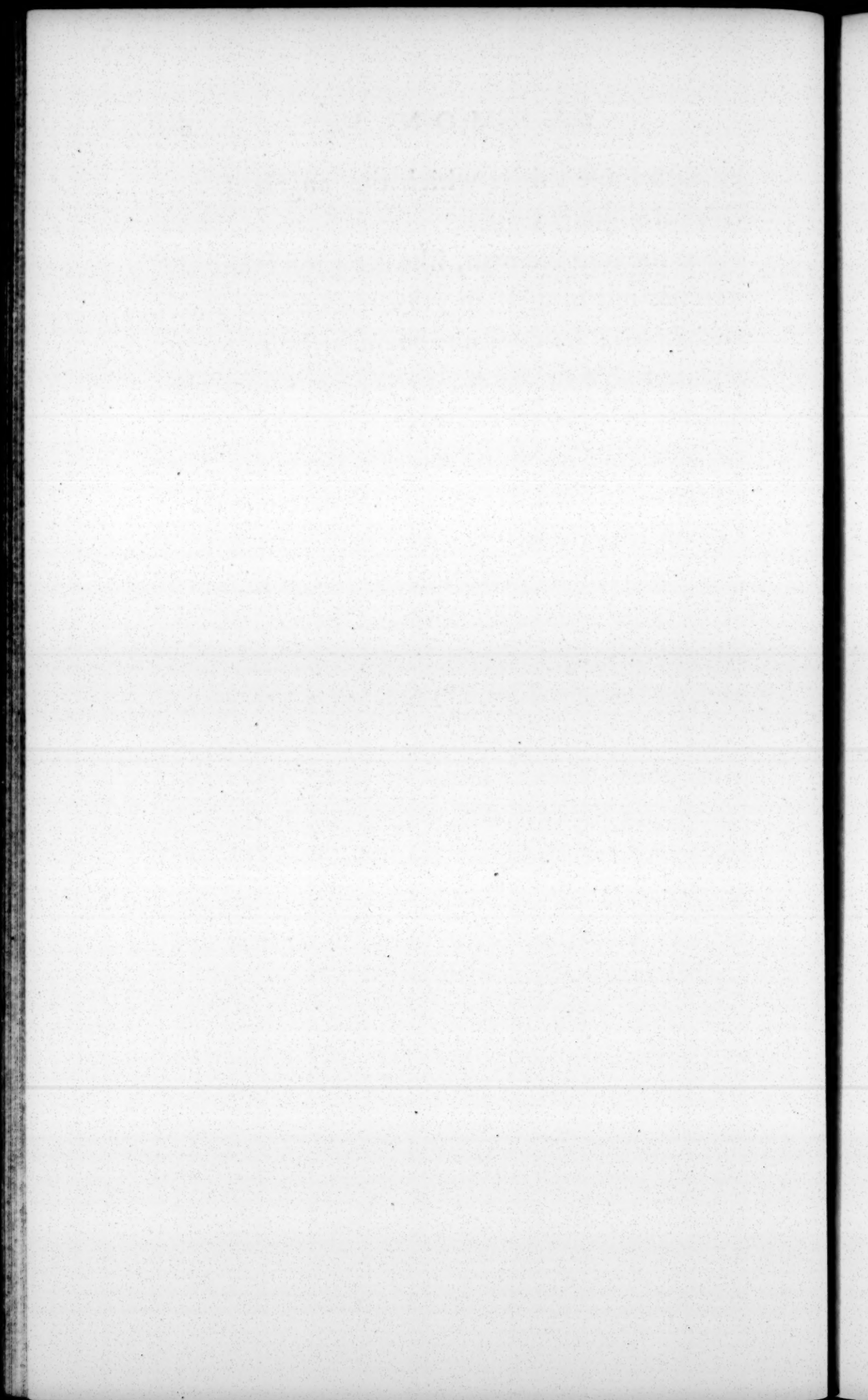
And what is most to be lamented, we frequently find that those very persons, who one would think should be the best able to resist the encroachments of this vice, are most easily foiled and overcome by it. Their great learning and parts, most excellent endowments, which might be very serviceable to God's glory and the good of his Church, are by an excess of pride frequently abused in the maintaining unnecessary disputations, and sometimes dangerous controversies.

But with none does it more surprisingly display itself, than those who set up for men of reason, who think it beneath them to travel on with the rest of mankind, but arrogantly pretend to discover the sublimest truths and the most inconceivable mysteries. The knowledge of God and of our Saviour whom he hath sent, is too low a theme for men of such refined thoughts and deep contemplation. It is enough for men of slender capacities to sit down contented with such knowledge as this; but it is worth the labour of an aspiring genius to enquire what God was doing before he laid the foundations of the world, to search into the hidden methods of Providence, and
pry

pry into those things which the angels themselves are ignorant of.

But the humble man, like the good Psalmist, exercises not himself in great matters for their wiser heads; he does not begin to build when he is not able to finish; he considers that the business of his own calling, and the saving of his own soul, is work enough for him, so as not to trouble himself with such matters which he hath little time for, and less understands.

To conclude—Humility has the promise of God's more immediate love and favour, which will abundantly supply whatever we may find wanting in ourselves. Those that are meek will he guide in judgment, and such as are gentle them shall he learn his way. He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes, even he shall dwell in the tabernacle of the Lord, and rest upon his holy hill. He shall guide him with his counsel, and after that receive him with glory.



S E R M O N VI.

PSALM XIX. PART OF VER. 7.

*The law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting
the soul.*

WERE the Psalms of holy David to be considered merely as human compositions, and not as a part of the inspired writings, they would appear to every person of true taste and unbiassed judgment, to be a set of the most noble poems that were ever yet compiled, abounding with the most divine and lofty sentiments, and beautified and enlivened with the sublimest strains of piety and devotion. But what human composition can be compared with the inimitable beauties of the Psalm before us? How seldom are found the two different perfections of plainness and sublimity in one and the same writing! But this

divine hymn is adorned with the agreeable union of both these excellencies. How high and lofty, yet how plain and obvious, are the sentiments! how solemn, how graceful and majestic, yet how smooth and easy, is the style of them!

The design of this Psalm is to praise and extol the glory of God; and to excite us to contemplate the ways by which God has been pleased to display himself to mankind.

In the beginning of the Psalm the royal Author first mentions that general manifestation of his wisdom and goodness, which so gloriously appears in the wonders he has shewn in the formation of the world; but more particularly in the beauty, order, and constancy of the heavenly bodies, the most noble and conspicuous part of the visible creation. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.* The great Creator of the world, by spreading out the heavens like a curtain, has laid open before us a fair volume of his divinity, in characters legible to all mankind. These glorious bodies, as they roll round the world, proclaim the honour and greatness of their Creator to the most distant

distant parts of the universe. Even these inanimate beings sing forth his praise, and extol his glory among all nations : *There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard, and understood among them ; their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world.*

But though these things publish to us the glory of their Creator, they do not declare to us his will. They manifest indeed to us *that there is a God* ; they declare to us that that God must be infinite in power, in wisdom and in goodness ; but they are far from revealing to us his mind and counsel. These irrational beings are sufficient to convince us that God is to be obeyed ; and they themselves may be examples of obedience, and a reproach to rational creatures who perform not their duty ; yet they are unable to teach us what obedience he requires from us, they cannot inform us of our duty. The book of nature plainly demonstrates the divinity of its Author, and what rules he has prescribed to the sun, moon, and stars, to direct them in their courses : but this alone is too imperfect a guide to intelligent beings, who are to pay their Maker

a willing obedience, and a reasonable service.

Holy David, having observed, in the six first verses of this Psalm, how far God has displayed his power, wisdom, and goodness in the works of creation, proceeds, in the next verse, to shew how much more clearly and perfectly he has manifested himself to us by his written word — by revelation.

Here he has given us a body of laws, the most plain and intelligible, the most pure and perfect; a full and complete summary of all the duties he requires from us. In this is contained the whole mind and counsel of God: in this all the commandments of God are delivered to us by the mouth of God himself. Nothing can be added to them to make them more complete; nor any thing diminished from them without leaving them defective. *For the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. His judgments are true, and righteous altogether: more to be desired are they than gold: moreover*
by

by them is thy servant taught; and in keeping of them there is great reward.

That the law of Moses was a *perfect law*; that is, that it contained all things that were necessary for God's people the *Jews*, to believe and to practise, in order to obtaining the promises of it, is evident from the frequent and pressing admonitions of *Moses* to the children of *Israel*, to the most religious, strict, and inviolable observation of it. And that this was the *entire* will of God, and to which only he expected their exact obedience, he frequently, through the whole book of Deuteronomy, repeats to them, *These are the commandments, these, and none else, the statutes and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that thou mightest fear the Lord to keep all his statutes*: And, that none might doubt but that *all his statutes* were herein contained, that nothing more was to be expected to make up the perfection of the law, or supply any imaginable defect in it; he adds this caution, *Ye shall not add unto the word that I command, neither shall ye diminish aught from it*. Thus the perfection of the first covenant, of the old law, is undeniably evi-

denced ; to which Scriptures our blessed Saviour, while upon earth, upon all occasions, appealed ; these alone he made the rule of his actions ; from these he convinced the *Jews* of their unbelief ; and these he commanded all to search, and have recourse to, for infallible counsel and direction.

Now if in the *old law* there was such perfection, can we imagine, there can be any defect in the more full discovery of God's will to man, the Gospel delivered to us by his son Christ Jesus ? No, certainly. As the Apostles received the fullest instructions from their Master, in every thing that was necessary for the salvation of his Church ; so, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have they faithfully delivered down what they had been taught ; dispensing entirely, as faithful stewards, all, and nothing but that truth, which they had received from Christ. They, in *their writings*, *still preach to the world, and being dead yet speak.*

I shall now lay before you a short sketch of the duties enjoined us by the *Scriptures*, that thereby their *perfection*, and *sufficiency to salvation*, may be sufficiently demonstrated.—And *first*, as they assure us of the being of a God,
so

so they give us the most rational and excellent rules concerning the worship of him. *God is a spirit ; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* What holy directions are there given concerning the duty of prayer, both public and private ! What wise and admirable cautions has the great Author of our religion laid down to prevent indecency, or irreverence, in our applications to the Throne of Grace ! What rules to prevent hypocrisy in private devotion !—*Retire into thy closet, and pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which is in secret shall reward thee openly*—a command this, which none but God could be the author of. For how absurd were it for a being less than God to require such an application to himself ! Who but a being that had intercourse with our souls, and knew our most secret motions, would enjoin us to direct our addresses to himself in such a cloister retirement, out of the observation of an eye less than omniscient ? What incomparable rules do the Scriptures likewise afford us for trusting in God's providence ! How clearly do they display all his attributes—his wisdom in the creation, preservation,

servation, and government of the world, throughout all its various vicissitudes and revolutions; but more especially in the wonderful work of redemption; *God manifest in the flesh!*

Secondly. Nor are those precepts which teach us our duty to our *neighbour*, less than those which direct us in our duty to God—precepts, which are the fountain of peace and quietness; obliging men to a conscientious discharge of their several duties, in their respective stations of life; restraining oppression, malice, and revenge; and striking at the root and foundation of all vice, by curbing our thoughts as well as our actions. Were doctrines like these universally practised, what a happy paradise would this world be! The *Deists* themselves must own, that they owe their safety and protection to the very religion they cavil at: it is even for their interest in this world, to wish it true, were it not so; and nothing but the punishment of their sins and follies which it threatens in the next world, can ever incline them to wish it false. As the duties of the Christian religion are thus perfect in themselves, so there is as great a perfec-

perfection in those motives and arguments by which it recommends them to our practice. If tranquillity of mind, and ease in this world, be desirable, *godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come.* If the prospect of punishments that are due to sinners can have any force to restrain us, the wrath of an Almighty God, and the torments prepared for impenitent sinners, are disclosed to us. If a prospect of rewards can engage us to the practice of virtue, we are infallibly assured of an eternity of happiness. If a sense of gratitude can move and affect us, God has revealed how highly we are indebted to him for our life, and every blessing of it, but more especially for his inestimable love in redeeming us. If we plead ignorance of our duty in excuse for our neglect of it, *God hath clearly shewed thee, O man, what is good; and now what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do mercy, to love justice, and to walk humbly with thy God?* If we are timorous and distrustful of God and ourselves, the Scriptures tell us, Christ laid down his precious life as a sacrifice, and has reconciled us to God on the mild terms of faith and repentance.

This

This is the whole sum of our religion, as laid down in the Scriptures; this the substance of all that is required of us. By this guide then, and this only, we are to form our actions; and, to animate and encourage our diligence, we are by this assured, that there are different degrees of happiness in heaven: *He that soweth plenteously, shall reap plenteously. As one star differs from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.* As there is nothing fitter for God himself to teach, and man to learn, than all the *practical* duties of holy writ; so all the most *speculative* doctrines of it, all its most sacred and profound mysteries, are evident characters of the wisdom and goodness of God. Every article of our faith has a relation to practice, and tends to the advancement of piety and virtue. Every mystery is a mystery of love and goodness; and every speculative doctrine affords us a fresh motive to obedience. Others may fear God; but it is the Christian only that can love, trust in, and look up to him as his Guide, his Father, his Redeemer.—What then can be added with regard to faith, to make the plan of the Christian religion more complete? Is not the law of the
Lord

Lord perfect? Are not the Scriptures sufficient to salvation? *Other foundation can no man lay,* says the apostle, *than that which is laid; Jesus Christ being the head-corner-stone.* The infidel may propose his beggarly elements; the *enthusiast* may pretend to higher dispensations of grace, to advance his own pretended perfection; but the Scriptures being perfect, other doctrines are absurd, other extraordinary gifts unnecessary.

Whenever then we take these holy oracles into our hands, it is our duty to learn, and not to cavil at them—to receive them not as the word of man, but of God. This is the office of every true disciple; void of all vain conceit of his own wisdom, natural reason, or acquired abilities, such only is to be admitted into the school of Christ. A sincere and hearty love of truth ought likewise to accompany our perusal of the Scriptures—retaining no prejudices to bias our judgment, no preconceived opinions to warp them to our own interpretation; no ostentation to wrest them to a wrong sense, or misinterpret them to countenance the opinions of any sect or party; but so to read them, not purely to find out wherein others contradict them,

them, but only to improve and amend our own lives by them, and to examine whether or not we ourselves are in the right way that leads to salvation.

And, O blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that, by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

S E R M O N VII.

ST. MATTHEW, CHAP. XXII. VER. 21.

Render therefore to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's.

OUR blessed Lord and his Apostles were very particular, upon all occasions, in teaching us a lesson of duty and subjection to those governors in church and state, whom God in his providence should please to set over us. They taught, in the plainest terms, that whatever liberties and privileges the Gospel entitled its professors to, it did by no means destroy or lessen the allegiance they owed to the secular powers; and that they were not at all the less subject to kings and magistrates because they were the disciples and followers of Christ.—This was a very seasonable caution to the new converts; because not only their enemies

mies at that time represented them as a factious, seditious sect, and their religion as setting them free from all obedience and subjection to the secular powers: but they themselves might mistake (as some of them, in fact, were supposed to do) the extent of their Christian liberty, and imagine they were above every jurisdiction but that of God only. It was therefore necessary to inform them, and the rest of the world, that the principles of a Christian are far from countenancing disobedience and rebellion; far from tending to the subversion of government, or dissolving the ties and obligations by which we are bound to our superiors: but, on the contrary, nothing is, or can be, more effectual, than the laws of Christ and his Apostles, to promote and establish the security of states and kingdoms—the authority of magistrates—the regularity, good order, and submission of all persons to their lawful governors. How much our blessed Saviour intended to enforce this point, we learn from the context. A question was asked concerning the lawfulness of paying tribute to the Roman governor: his answer to which convinced them, that he acknowledged there was a debt due to kings and magistrates, the

the representatives of God, as well as to God himself; and that one as well as the other must have their respective due. *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.* But to give you a clearer view of the whole passage, I would observe to you, that the chief design of the Jews in putting this question to our blessed Saviour, was, to ensnare and find occasion of accusation against him. To this end, they sent unto him a mixed party of Herodians and Pharisees: the former of whom were great profelytes and flatterers of the Roman power; the latter as much averse to it, acknowledging no other sovereign but God only. These were delegated to offer this ensnaring question, "*Whether it was lawful for them to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?*" expecting which way soever he answered, they should completely gain their end. If he declared it *lawful*, then the multitude would detest him as a betrayer of their ancient liberties; if he declared it *unlawful*, then the Herodians would accuse him as a rebel to the Emperor. But our blessed Lord, knowing their treacherous design against him, demanded a sight of their tribute-money; and they acknowledging the superscription to be Cæsar's (which, according

to their own maxims, was acknowledging Cæsar to be king) confounded them with this answer: *Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.*

To a people so remarkably distinguished for loyalty to their king, and affection for the present happy establishment, it seems almost needless to say any thing on this subject. Notwithstanding, I shall beg leave to offer to your consideration,

First, The chief articles of the subjects duty to their king.

Secondly, Shall endeavour to enforce the practice of them.

The chief articles of the subjects duty to their king are given us by St. Paul to the Romans — *Tribute, custom, fear, and honour*: and in his Epistle to Timothy, *Prayer for them* is also enjoined, as a matter of especial concern. Under *tribute* and *custom* are comprehended all kinds of legal taxes and impositions for the support of government. To these every subject is bound to contribute, in his just and lawful proportion, to the maintenance and welfare of that particular state under which he is protected:
and

and this he is to do, without evading, without craftily or fraudulently withdrawing his shoulders from the common burden, so as either to suffer his country to fall into confusion for want of proper supplies, or leave it to be sustained by the unequal, immoderate, and oppressive impositions on others. The Apostle further requires us to pay our king obedient and reverential *fear*; to be tender and solicitous that we incur not his displeasure, or awaken his power against us; to be cautious in our whole demeanour towards him; to have an awful care for his favour and esteem, and such a due sense of the distance that is between us, as may effectually restrain us from all undutiful actions, and from reflecting, reproachful words. — We are further required to *honour* the king; to esteem, value, and reverence him who is invested with the sovereign power; to look upon him as God's appointed minister and representative on earth; to regard him as our common parent; and to love him with all the tenderness and affection, as well as observe him with the awe and duty of children. The Apostle further enjoins *prayer* for kings, as a matter of especial moment and concern. He exhorts us to pray

for averting all evils from them, for obtaining all good things to them ; and, with occasional *intercessions*, for conferring all needful gifts and graces upon them ; as the Interpreters, in explaining St. Paul's words, commonly distinguish, *supplications, prayers, and intercessions for kings, and all that are in authority.*

These are the chief articles of a subject's duty to his king : but it may be proper to add, “ that our subjection is not due to the sovereign alone ; but every subordinate magistrate, deriving his power from the sovereign authority, is entitled to our obedience.” The reasonableness and obligation of this will further appear under my second particular, wherein I proposed to enforce what I have now laid before you.

That men cannot subsist in any tolerable degree of comfort and peace without society ; nor society be maintained without government ; nor government be supported without laws and discipline ; nor laws and discipline be of any use, without some one to preserve that discipline, and put those laws in execution—are all truths so confirmed by reason and experience, as need no further argument to establish them. But now whoever is entrusted with that power,
has

has a very heavy burden laid upon him. He labours and watches for the public good ; it is therefore reasonable and necessary, that such a suitable provision should be made for the support of the dignity of his high station and character, as may answer all the occasions of government ; and, unless those other duties of fear and honour are as punctually paid, the ends and designs of government are not yet obtained. For what government can subsist, if the prince, or they who are commissioned to act under him, should suffer, or be liable to suffer, rudeness and insults from those beneath them ? What public designs can be carried into execution, if every one who thinks himself wiser than his superiors, should have the liberty to reproach them, because his counsel is not followed, nor his schemes and models thought proper to be complied with ? This duty is made an essential part of our religion : it is prescribed in both Testaments : in *both*, at the same time, and in the same place, with the fear of God—*Fear God ; honour the king*. This plainly intimates that the power of the king is a branch of God's power ; that God will look upon every breach or violation of it as an in-

jury to himself; and, in a word, that no man will be deemed truly to *fear God*, who does not also *honour the king*. The wise man carries it further, and forbids to entertain ill conceits, or ill wishes in our minds towards him—*Curse not the king, no, not in thine heart*. The last duty I mentioned which we owe to our king, is, that of *praying to God* for him—a duty this of such general service, so particularly enjoined by St. Paul, that I cannot but more largely insist on it by such considerations, which will shew our obligation to it, and enforce our observance of it. We owe this duty to our King, first, out of regard and good-will to the public. The safety of a king is a considerable part of the public welfare; the whole state, as it were, living and breathing in him. His fall, on the other hand, *shaketh the very earth; putteth things out of course*; transfers the administration into new and untried hands, and makes even liberty and property uncertain. Hence David was properly styled *the Light of Israel*; and even Zedekiah, a wicked and perverse king, is called by the Prophets, *the breath of our nostrils*. Again, the piety and virtue of a king is of great consequence to his kingdom.

kingdom. A righteous example on the throne gives an authority to righteousness; is of more influence to encourage virtue, and discountenance vice, than all his laws and commands; it makes the subject like himself, and procures to both the favour and blessing of God. How did piety flourish in the reign of David! What abundance of prosperity did it call down from Heaven upon Israel! How did the goodness of that prince transmit favours and mercies upon the kingdom long after his death! In the reign even of Hezekiah, God declared by his Prophet, "*I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.*" It is moreover observable from the whole scripture history, that there is a kind of communication of merit and guilt between the king and his people; that mutually each of them is rewarded for the virtues, each punished for the vices, of the other. God, for the iniquities of a people, often withdraweth his grace from their king; as, on the other hand, the vices of a king are frequently made instruments in the hands of God to punish and chastise the people. The untimely death of Josiah is an example of the former; the sins of Manasseh,

which were avenged of the Jews, even after their reformation, of the latter. From these considerations it appears that prayer for our king is an act of love and benevolence to the public; that in praying for his safety, his prosperity, and his virtue, we, in effect, pray for the safety, the prosperity, and virtue of our country. Another material inducement to this duty arises from the difficulties and dangers which they who are invested with the sovereign power are exposed to, in conducting public affairs. They have matters to deliberate on, which are dark and uncertain; cases to determine, which require the spirit of counsel, and judgment from above to direct them. They have enterprizes to conduct, which require more than human industry and strength to accomplish. They have all the infirmities of other men, and are more eminently subject to outward temptations. The world is continually assailing them with all its advantages, with all its baits of pleasure, with all its enticements to pride, oppression, injustice, and luxury. Their state, wealth, and power, exempt them from the common restraints: they have many to flatter and applaud their worst vices; few faithful friends

friends to advise, reprove, and persuade them. Hence are they in need of divine grace and assistance to preserve them from sin, and to conduct them in the paths of virtue. And hence ariseth the necessity of our beseeching God to assist them in their government, to direct their councils; to protect their persons, and guard their hearts from the prevalency of temptation.—Nay, to this the subject is obliged by the common ties of gratitude and justice: they are the ministers of God, the guardians of his people, the protectors of his church: under them we enjoy the fruits of our industry, the common comforts and conveniencies of life, with some tolerable security: to them we owe the protection of right and innocence; the preservation of peace and order; the restraint and correction of vice: hence are due to them a very respectful obedience and affection; the which many of us have no other way to express or exercise, than by earnest prayers (which lay within the power of all of us) for their welfare. These, offered with frequency, sincerity, and zeal, are ever efficacious. If the effects of them are not always discernible, yet they are certainly real: if they be not as perfect

fect as we desire, yet they are as full and competent as expediency requires, or the condition of things will bear. There may be hindrances to a full success of our best prayers: they may not always prevail to make princes completely good, or completely prosperous; for some concurrence of their own wills is requisite to produce their own virtue; and the state of things and capacity of persons are not always fitted for prosperity. But yet our prayers are not quite vain and fruitless: the Almighty never appointeth means unavailable to the end: he would never have commanded us particularly to pray for kings, if he did not intend to listen to our prayers; and, for their sake, *to give salvation to kings, and mercy to his anointed.*

Since therefore we have these inducements to pray for our king, and such happy returns may be expected from our prayers; let us, by an earnest performance of this duty, shew ourselves good Christians and good subjects. *Prayer* may as justly stand among the duties of a subject, among the *things that are Cæsar's*, as *tribute, custom, fear, and honour*: nay, it, in a manner, includes all these; is, at least, an argument of our good disposition to pay them these duties,

duties, and the surest way to preserve and improve that disposition in the subject's breast. And since all these articles of duty so justly belong to our sovereign, both for his preservation and reward, let us fail him in none. It is our duty, likewise, to pray for *ourselves*; to beseech God that he would give us *all* grace to live in a peaceable subjection to our king; that we may never be wanting in honour to his person, and dutiful submission to his authority; that he would grant him a long and happy reign over us; and to direct and influence his councils, that all his endeavours for the public good may be crowned with success: and that, when it shall please God to exchange his corruptible for an incorruptible crown, there never may be one wanting in his house to succeed him in the government of these kingdoms; that our posterity *may see his children's children, and peace upon Israel.* Amen.

Now to God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and praise, now and for ever.

S E R M O N V I I I .

JOB, CHAP. XLII. VER. 6.

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

“ **A** BHOR myself! Is this the way to make
“ me the friend of God, by trampling on
“ his own image, and treating it with scorn?
“ Will not nature start at such barbarity as
“ this? Can it consist with the justice of Hea-
“ ven to inflict such severe punishments for a
“ few idle mispent hours? Is there not a more
“ decent way of expiating offences than the un-
“ sightly penance of dust and ashes? Will not
“ this unseemly pomp of penitence make me
“ ridiculous in the eyes of the world? Can this
“ thorny path lead me to the enjoyment of
“ peace and happiness? Is this the comfortable
“ doctrine of Christ, so much magnified by its
“ preachers,

“ preachers, and embraced by its professors ?
“ No ; let deluded, weak minds labour on still
“ with their burthen ; let them content them-
“ selves with their hard lot, nor ever know
“ how to amend their choice. I serve a kinder,
“ more indulgent master ; and live at large
“ amid secure plenty. I despise the mercenary
“ arts of priestcraft, and smile at the fond con-
“ ceit of repentance and another world.” Thus
argues the man of liberty and pleasure ; rioting
among the sons of mirth, and sunk deep in sloth
and sensuality. The perverted state of his mind
will not give him patience and ingenuity to
weigh and examine the nature of religious du-
ties ; and the seeming impossibility of satisfying
the sword of divine justice, introduces the most
absurd and uncharitable notions of every thing
that is sacred. This is the true spring of this
aversion to the doctrine of repentance ; a doc-
trine of an unsightly, disagreeable aspect : but
disagreeable as it is, the libertine views it with
more pleasure in this light, that he may wan-
ton in the darling circle of dissipation with less
hindrance and regret. Much it is to be wished,
that men of this cast of mind would give way
to reflection ; forbear their harsh interpretations
on

on every thing that looks like duty ; struggle hard to overcome the allurements of sin ; and bear with some difficulty, in order to attain a certain reward. True it is, flesh and blood are seldom easy under compulsion and restraint, and nature knows no freedom in chains : but must we engross all the sweets, and taste none of its bitterness ? Have not dissoluteness and luxury their gloomy seasons ? and do we not suffer much for our licentious follies ? How can men thus suffer themselves to be imposed on ? Repentance, terrible as it appears, has no such hardships as the tyranny of vice ; nor is there any thing so hideous in a virtuous resolution as to affright us into despair. Reason and reflection will bring us to a sight of our follies ; and though hard is the task to keep a sincere purpose of amendment, who would stake the value of a soul, to all the treasures of a perishing world ? In fact, there can be no evasion in such a case as this. Eternal life is of such concern, that to purchase it, every other consideration must be parted with. The old man must be crucified in us, and the whole body of sin abolished : not a bosom-lust should be left to worry and prey upon the mind ; no distorted appetite to stifle and
enslave

enslave our reason : but the conscience should be pure and clear—pure as the beams of morning light, clear as a rock of crystal. An heart-felt flood of tears must wash out our stains, and purge us from the pollutions of the flesh : it is this that softens a stony heart, and makes it susceptible of good impressions ; it is this that scatters the thick clouds of guilt, and gives us a prospect of a new and brighter day. Nature herself must pass through a change, before she can recover her former beauty ; and much toil must be used to polish off her rust, and make her fresh and fair, as she came out of the hands of her Almighty Creator. It is not an empty sigh, an accidental wish, that will appease the wrath of God ; it is a continual mortifying our corrupt affections, an abhorring and rooting out those poisonous passions that have chained us down to so much misery, and led us captive into the power of the devil. The disfigured face and mournful accent, the gloomy veil of sackcloth and ashes (so literally adopted by the dissembling Jew), with a long train of unmeaning postures, and antick sorrow, may look like signs of a true convert ; but far from that repentance that will save sinners : it is a
sensible

sensible, submissive sorrow for all our transgressions, and an active resolution of immediate reformation, that must make us welcome votaries at the throne of grace : *it is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision*, but a change of the whole man, a new creature. “ But is this to be effected immediately ? Can infected reason, and distorted judgment ; can an ungovernable will, and distempered passions, be brought to the discipline of virtue at a moment’s warning ? Is not the regenerate man a work of time and pains ; a creature of industry and long labour ? Can nature be formed anew on a sudden ? Is it so easy to correct a vicious habit ? Will the Æthiopian change his colour ? or the leopard’s spots, can they be wiped out ? How then can God lay on man such an unreasonable task, so irksome, so unpleasant ? The path of virtue is rugged and ruinous, enough to terrify the sight and forbid my entrance. The flesh is frail and feeble, and the faculties of the soul equally infirm. A thousand temptations lie before me ; pleasure smiles, and reason is too weak to resist. Can I be blamed for the softness of my frame, or at all answerable for the loss of my liberty ? However, cannot a deep sigh or a strained tear

raise compassion in an angry father, but must I give up all the darling offspring of my sins to the rage of a merciless fire? If this must be done, yet give me time to wean myself from my affection, and bid a tender farewell to what I once so dearly loved." Hard measure will this be thought by the false-reasoning, self-deluded sinner; but it is what will meet with its reward hereafter, and place him in the view and assurance of unmixed and immortal glories. To prepare such for this welcome change, I would say before him the measures he is to pursue.

The first step necessary to repentance is, to commune with his own heart; to turn his eyes inward, and seriously look back on his past offences, and make an impartial scrutiny of all the actions of his life. Consideration is not a sulky, drowsy posture of thought, tending only to darken our perceptions; much less is it a rigid moroseness of humour, a violent checking the activity of our spirits, which confuses and baffles our understanding; but it is a vigorous application of our minds to review our past actions, for the better government of our future conduct; it is a manly exercise of our rational powers, which will steadily hold the images of things

things to our view, and trace out all the hidden springs of action. To know ourselves, to make our own hearts the subject of our meditations, will bring us far forward in our way to the school of virtue. The greatest assurance of an happy conversion is, to be able to recollect our straggling thoughts, and marshal them in a prudent and comely order. This is in the power of even the most corrupted mind to effect. To the neglect of this the Almighty pronounces the ruin of men, and has established it as the only way to their solemn recovery. If indeed repentance was only a sudden qualm, a short delirium, or a flash of fear, then the supine and thoughtless would be worthy penitents: but since a new course of solid virtue, and the denial of the softest gratifications of sense, are so absolutely necessary to regain the favour of Heaven, none but the wise and reflecting, the cautious and deliberate observer can find any relish or advantage in this doctrine, or prevail with himself to embrace it. Vain are the hopes of those fanatics who flatter themselves, that the grace of God will correct and reform them without the concurrence of their own studious endeavours: let such rest assured, that strong

and victorious as the means of grace are imagined to be, they have no other influence on the soul than by raising it out of a lethargy to a pungent sense of its danger, and giving it scope to struggle and enlarge itself from the fetters of sin. To imagine otherwise, would be to turn religion into a charm, and the whole sacred dispensation into a kind of witchcraft. It was certainly a quite different motive that induced Holy David to say of himself: *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy precepts*: it was not the work of irresistible grace that brought him over, and reconciled him to God; but a mature and well-weighed application of heart, that led him to a sight and aversion of his follies. But we are not to sit down here, and content ourselves with this discovery. We must proceed in this great work, to a full and settled purpose of reformation. It is a melancholy observation, that some of the greatest proficients in this pious exercise frequently relapse into their old disorders, into their former stubborn, unrelenting state. They falter in the execution of their purpose, and their efforts are all faint and languid. They have not spirit to strike at the root of their corruptions, or
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pluck out the sting and venom of temptation. Like parting friends, they weep over their vices; yet wish for a time to renew their acquaintance, and meet and embrace with greater tenderness. Thus marble will sometimes drop in dew, yet not an atom of its rocky substance melts away. To tempers so irresolute, the only remedy to be applied is, to balance the advantage of sin against the severities of virtue, and the pressing necessity of an holy life against the danger of indolence and neglect: from a careful comparison of this kind, they would soon declare themselves champions for the honour of religion, and put themselves forward in the business of conversion. Life runs on apace, death and judgment will soon overtake our weary steps; we must therefore prepare to meet the shock with such a firmness of mind, that no efforts of the tempter can conquer or enfeeble. It must not be like a fleecy cloud, that every wind blows away; but a wise, steady principle to direct our choice, and conduct us in the grand concern of reformation. An irresolute temper can never prevail; it is ever self-tormenting and uneasy; ever combating with imaginary difficulties; and, like the Israelites in their passage to Canaan,

raising up the ghost of a danger, rather than want an object to work upon their fears. But it is now no time to halt ; nor to say, in the language of the sluggard, “ *there is a lion in the way.*” No subtil reserve must retard his progress ; but the awakened sinner must shew an undaunted gallantry of mind in resolving to return, and suffer no insinuating temptation to defeat his purpose. Having brought him to this pious disposition, we must attend him to the end of his stage, and lay before him the necessity of an ingenuous confession of his former offences, an acknowledgment of his sins with the greatest humility and remorse—And here no artifice must be made use of to palliate his guilt ; no formal hypocrisy to colour his crimes : there is no dealing thus with an all-seeing God, by whom all our actions are known even when lying dormant in the womb of thought. The simple act of confession is, in its own nature, of no great signification ; but then it is pleasing and grateful to God ; and to such has he promised forgiveness, when accompanied with a true self-condemnation. In this state of mind did the poor publican approach the temple : in an humble, penitent posture he stood

stood afar off, *and would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven*, where all even his minutest crimes were registered: there he smote upon his guilty breast, and endeavoured to soften the rigour of divine justice, with this affecting request—*God be merciful to me a sinner*. The same pleasing path ought every true penitent to pursue, as this, and this only, will lead him to the completion of repentance—actual reformation. Without this, all he has done will be but an idle, unprofitable amusement.

This is the great condition of our reconciliation with God, the hinge on which all our hopes of glory turn. If in this we fail, all our sighs, all our tears, all our pangs, will avail us nothing. That our wounds may be healed by the bare sense of our guilt, or by faith alone, may be the language of false teachers; but it is not the language of scripture. *Wherewithal, says the prophet Micah, shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of*

my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Not every one, that crieth, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of our Father, which is in heaven.

Reformation of life then being the essence of repentance, how wretchedly infatuated they who delay conversion! The pointing out this way of reconciliation, was an instance of mercy which the apostate angels could never obtain; they were utterly abandoned to the sting and torment of their dire reflections, without the least glimpse, the least possibility of recovering their former happiness. Not one *stripe* did Jesus suffer, not one drop of blood did he shed, not the least indignation did he undergo, for their sakes, or to raise them to the hopes of peace and favour; but for *us* did the *Son of God* lay down his life, and become the propitiation for the sins of the world, that we might be put into a capacity of atoning for our crimes by repentance; and that repentance might be a means of leading us to salvation. What an inestimable privilege is this to the race of men! Yet how
many

many have basely contemned it ! How shamefully have they abused the long-suffering of their Maker, by assaulting his throne with all the violence of sin ! Are these the sacrifices of a broken spirit, which that gracious Being has sworn never to despise ? Is this the return for all the prodigies of his mercy ? Unthinking men ! thus scornfully to spurn at their everlasting interest, and sport and play on the very precipice of destruction ! How can they so tamely couch under the load of vice, without one struggle for that liberty to which they are entitled by grace ? Let such reflect, that by various unexpected accidents the thread of life is often cut off, and the sinner hurried away to the fullen grave, when he is not master of one moment of time to recollect himself : if otherwise, what confusion must he be involved in, when he finds himself sinking into a dubious state, and covered over with guilt ! *Do ye therefore be wise in time ; know the things that belong to your peace, before they are hidden from your eyes.* While the day-spring of grace shines on before you, carefully look back on your past offences, and endeavour with an honest heart and awakened zeal to correct and amend them ; *then, but not till*

till then, can you expect mercy. The man, who can thus free himself from the number and guilt of his sins, will soon perceive himself in a state of salvation ; he will gain a deeper insight into the folly and vanity of the world, and thence draw off his affections from it ; he will look down on its tinselled pomp without fear and without surprise ; his relish will be refined, his taste ennobled ; his eyes will be wholly fixed on the seats of the blessed : there will be his treasure ; there will be his triumph !

To which triumphant place, God in his infinite mercy bring us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, now and for ever.

S E R M O N IX.

II TIMOTHY, CHAP. I. VER. 6.

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.

WHEN St. Paul was summoned by the duties of his function from the church which he had planted at Ephesus, he committed the care of it to Timothy; to one who had been his disciple, his companion, entered very young into the ministry, and, for his eminent qualifications, was soon raised to the episcopal order.

The great Apostle knew well how to value merit and virtue, in whatever age he found them: so that as these created a perfect confidence and regard in the one, they produced a filial

filial affection and entire fidelity in the other. During the unwilling absence of the Apostle, his affection for Timothy, and care for the church, did not at all diminish. To supply his place, he sent two Epistles ; in which is contained a body of truly apostolical canons ; directing him, and all other pastors, how to conduct themselves in their ministerial offices—a standing rule for their government of the people committed to their charge.

From some passages in the second Epistle, many have thought it written not long before his martyrdom, and sent to, as it were, his adopted son, as a dying pledge of his love, a kind remembrancer to excite him to diligence, and a conscientious discharge of his duty — *I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.* Behold the care of the faithful monitor ! He had no reason to suspect the watchful diligence of the now approved pastor ; yet did his eager zeal for the church of Christ prompt him to give this incomparable advice, to press home this honest charge, that he might seriously consider the honourable calling to which he was advanced ; the many extraordinary gifts obtained

obtained by the imposition of his hands, in order to excite him to a due improvement of the graces received.

The words before us point out to our consideration *the significancy of the imposition of hands; the office conferred by that rite; the character of the person on whom this ceremony was performed; the gift conferred by it; and his duty in return for it.*

The ceremony of imposition of hands was ever used as an ancient rite of blessing by prayer. It is very probable it took its rise among Christians from a similar practice in the Jewish church, where it ever implied authority in the persons empowered to use it, and was the established mode of conferring any sacred office or dignity. Joshua was thus consecrated successor to Moses; and thus did the apostles and primitive Christians ever admit new members into the ministry of the church. For which reason it is, that our holy church retains the same custom in her offices on some signal occasions; particularly at the consecrating men to God's immediate service. This rite is made an outward sign of the invisible grace then bestowed; and the performance of it with prayer implies

implies a delegation of that authority to others with which they themselves had been invested by Christ.

What the imposition of hands particularly implies here, or what office was conferred on Timothy thereby, comes next under consideration. The office was *episcopal*: he was thereby constituted bishop of Ephesus, and invested with such privileges and authority which never were committed to a mere presbyter. This the records of the ancient church abundantly testify. But no occasion is there for other testimonies, when the tenor of St. Paul's Epistles fairly intimates his being left a resident bishop there, and invested with powers peculiar to that office and character: a power of ruling over the elders or presbyters, and a power of ordaining presbyters. This latter office has been universally attributed by the writers of the church to the *first order*. There are no canons extant which pretend to confer the power of ordination on bishops, though many prescribe rules for the exercise of it. This to an impartial mind must be a strong confirmation of their original authority, and plainly proves the exercise of that power before, without any restrictions

tions at all. More than three centuries had elapsed before this distinguishing authority was ever disputed : since which time, the discussion of this point has frequently exercised the pens of the learned world. But after all that has been said on this subject, I shall only offer, that, if the cotemporaries of the apostles are proper witnesses of apostolical discipline ; if the most approved fathers of the ancient church be esteemed the best interpreters of Scripture ; if that form of church-government be allowed primitive, which prevailed in the principal churches of Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria, even before the death of St. John ; if possession for seventeen hundred years, obtained without any known fraud or violence, will confer a good title ; and if no traces are extant of a general combination among the apostles, or their successors, to deceive the world by a treacherous usurpation of assumed powers ; then the established doctrine of these churches, which asserts episcopal power, remains firm and unshaken : their bishops consequently now exercise an authority derived from the apostles, which they delivered down by virtue of a
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commission they received from Christ—*As my Father sent me, so send I you.* All this may amount to a positive proof, that the power of ordination is an incommunicable right of the episcopal order; and to corroborate this may be subjoined the condemnation of that office by the councils of Constantinople and Alexandria, when performed by presbyters. How then is it that the power of imposition of hands is assumed by those, to whom it never was committed?---a power that cannot ordinarily descend but by the line of apostolical succession. Disclaiming to exert more authority than was granted to him, after he had preached to, converted, and baptised the Samaritans, Philip the Evangelist returned to the apostles, in order to send one properly qualified to *lay hands on them*. If this was so requisite in *confirmation*, the same reason will hold good in *ordination* also. Since then this power is solely lodged in the bishops of the Christian church; since it was in its full extent committed to Timothy by the imposition of St. Paul's hands, it must necessarily follow, that the office conferred on him was episcopal.

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The character of the person, on whom the apostle's hands were laid, is a circumstance well deserving observation. The preceding verse informs us, that he was a man of unfeigned faith; who did not put on the mask of a fair profession, but whose heart was devoted to the service of his master. His obedience to the gospel was exemplary; and the eminence of his station caused his virtuous zeal to shine with greater lustre, and diffuse itself for the benefit of mankind. On this amiable picture ought every man who is raised to this exalted station to fix his eyes. His character should equally rise with his dignity above the common level of mankind. His inclinations should keep pace with his power and opportunity to do good. An action that may be extenuated in another is highly criminal in him. What might pass unobserved in another, may be severely censured, may have a dangerous influence, when done by him. "It must be deemed a virtue," says an eminent writer, "in a private person, if he
" practise no evil, and do some good: but in a
" prince or governor, especially one who has
" a government of this nature committed to
" him, it is *wickedness* if he does not excel

“others.” By this eminent conduct did the venerable fathers of the church gain to themselves immortal honour, and to Christianity numerous converts, at a time when the profession of it was dangerous; when a bishoprick entitled the possessor only to the privilege of being more barbarously tormented: when no appendant honours graced the episcopal character, this drew the eyes and admiration of all upon it: when persecution and distress from the temporal powers was their hard lot, this brought credit to their profession, and made even their enemies espouse its cause. Splendid titles and large possessions, the present attendants on this exalted station, procure no real regard to the persons of men, unless accompanied with fidelity in their duty, and uprightness in their conversation. They may, indeed, gain, or rather command, a little outward respect; but it is their unfeigned faith must strike the hearts of men with that awe and reverence so justly due to their sacred characters. The former only dazzle the eyes of the world; while the latter shews both love and esteem; endears them to their fellow creatures, and makes them acceptable to God. Happy the church under the govern-

government of such faithful guardians ! Happy those guardians who thus edify and protect the church !

The gift obtained by the imposition of the apostle's hands, is the next object of our consideration. Timothy was reminded, by virtue of the former opinion the apostle had conceived of him, *to stir up the gift that was obtained by the laying on of hands.* By this outward significative action, he was invested with authority sufficient for the execution of his office : the Almighty joining his grace and power to this sacred ceremony, communicated therewith the miraculous gifts of his spirit. The first plantation of the gospel called for some such uncommon qualifications. The conversion of an infidel world, and the edification of an infant church, were works not to be attempted by the ordinary power of man : therefore did the providence of God abundantly supply this defect, by sending out the first publishers with a large commission, and a power of doing the most astonishing works ; inasmuch that on whom they laid their hands, the Holy Ghost came. So that at Timothy's consecration the gift of God was in a plentiful measure and

manner bestowed. *He was filled with the Holy Ghost* ; was thereby enabled to withstand the obstinacy of the Jew ; *to make foolish the wisdom of the Greek* ; and to promote the progress of the gospel amid all the persecutions of a powerful and malicious world. In these our days the Holy Ghost does not descend like a *rustling mighty wind* : the large effusions of grace, and power of working miracles, are entirely ceased : yet far be it from us to imagine, but that he still does accompany his own ordinances. The gospel is peculiarly the ministration of the Spirit : can it then with reason be suspected, it will ever be withdrawn, under that dispensation, from those who by a settled ministry continue the legal succession ? Still, doubtless, is it imparted in a way more ordinary and occult, yet no less real and effectual. Still, doubtless, is grace bestowed on the faithful and well-disposed, in proportions answerable to the exigencies of the church. Hence is fulfilled that good promise of our Lord — *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*. I do not pretend to examine the whole œconomy of divine grace ; to shew its importance and necessity, or to display the manner of its communication :

cation : suffice it to say, that there is a sanctifying principle assisting us in the discharge of our religious duties ; that there are various difficulties not to be overcome by the most accomplished endowments of nature ; that the most refined morality cannot purify the soul from the dross of original sin ; that, without this principle, the springs of action cannot move. These are truths evident to the apprehension of all who are conversant with the sacred writings, or in the least acquainted with the weak state of human nature : yet evident as these truths are, utterly ignorant are we of the manner in which this grace is communicated, and the means whereby it operates. Its ordinary influence is *now* dispensed like other natural or moral endowments ; the invisible bestower, from whose liberal hand all proceeds, not interposing, or exerting his power, after an extraordinary manner. With what grateful sensibility should this inestimable gift be received ! Every aid that is necessary for our respective stations (and the more exalted, the more are they exposed to difficulties) will hence be bestowed. But that high and sacred office, which this day engages our attention, more particularly calls for this divine

assistance. The person invested with it must necessarily encounter the ignorance, the prejudices, the passions of mankind, and stand forth a *bright and shining light* amid a dark and corrupted world. A task this, arduous and important; not to be undertaken without fervent supplications for proportionate measures of divine grace, a zealous disposition to receive its succours, and a firm persuasion that it will never be wanting to advance the interests of religion and virtue.

In grateful return for this divine favour, it is the duty of a *bishop* to *stir up the gift which is in him*; not to suffer the holy flame to abate and expire, but by a vigorous perseverance to cause its steady light to guide, and its genial warmth to enliven, all around him. Conscientiously to discharge the various duties of his function, both his natural and acquired abilities must be drawn forth into action. His instructions must direct, his counsels conduct, his example edify. He must be, both in a moral and religious sense, *the father of the fatherless, and cause the widow's heart to leap for joy*. Sparingly to dispense those talents committed to his trust, or to confine them within the narrow circle of engagement
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or interest, is utterly to defeat the grand purposes for which they were given into his charge. It is incumbent on him to instruct the ignorant, to seek for and relieve virtue in distress, and to raise modest merit from obscurity to the sphere in which it ought to move. This is the duty of every guardian of the church: and to crown his pious labours with success, his sacred character should be treated with the utmost respect, and his authority maintained by due obedience from all who have the interests of religion at heart. These are the only means to defeat the designs of the envious and malicious, ever ready to *speakevil of dignities*, and consequently bring their authority into contempt. But it is particularly incumbent on us, who have the honour to serve at the same altar, called by the same authority, though not consecrated to the same extent of power, to be herein an example to the world; ever to pay that respect and regard which we preach and inculcate to others. The welfare of the church, nay, our own interest, demands this. For in supporting the dignity of the bishop, we support the dignity of the presbyter: we endear *him* to *us*, and *we* engage his esteem. This mutual harmony will naturally

secure the reverence of men, give public testimony of the goodness of our form of church-government, and probably heal the wounds which heresy and schism have made.

God of his infinite mercy grant it may have these happy effects ; that as we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, and one hope of our calling ; so we may be all saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one shepherd, and bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ our Lord — to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N X.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. XVI. VER. 20, 21.

*And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores ;
And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.*

THE parable, of which these words are a part, represents to us two persons in very opposite situations : the one, in all the pomp and magnificence that a state of wealth and prosperity can give ; the other, in as low and forlorn a condition as human nature can well be exposed to ; *a beggar, laid at the rich man's gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.*

The poor man lingered on his weary life, till the last period of it came, and delivered him from all his sufferings. The rich man's enjoyments

ments were also cut short : and well would it have been for him, had the same period been put to his being : but the change of death only changed the scene. He is afterwards represented in hell ; lifting up his eyes amidst his torments ; espying Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom, in a state of the highest felicity ; and entreating Abraham that Lazarus might only be allowed to come to him, *to dip his finger in water, and cool his tongue.* But it was too late ; there was a much more difficult bar to pass, than the gate of the rich man's palace, which had separated them in life ; an impassable gulf, which cut off the possibility of any future communication between them : and not only so, but, in the councils of Providence, a reason why the rich man's brethren should not have any special warning given them of a life of inhumanity and voluptuousness. *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

Very improving is the instruction, and various the uses we may make of this history. We may hence learn how ridiculous is a life spent in thoughtless indolence, and sensual pleasure ; how senseless the sin of infidelity, speculative or practical ;

practical; how vain the use of riches, if not applied either to the good government, and preserving the subordination of society, or to the benefit of those poor wretches who stand in immediate want of relief and assistance: and how barbarous to neglect or overlook those who are both by nature and grace our equals, only on account of the accidental distinctions which the goods of fortune, as they are often termed, have made in the world. The two last of these useful topics come most properly under our present consideration; which at the same time they dissuade us from following the rich man's example, will greatly recommend the examples of the great and good, who will bestow a share of those blessings, with which God has supplied and entrusted them, to succour and support their distressed brethren.

The advantages of wealth and prosperity are indisputably great in the hands of those who have address and skill, as well as inclination, to make a right use of them. On these depend many real and solid enjoyments of human life. By these industry is encouraged, ingenuity rewarded, friendships cemented, alliances contracted, and dependencies (on which the strength of
every

every community is founded) enlarged. And by these the weakest members of the community, the oppressed and indigent, all who labour under any casual or providential distresses, may be relieved, and made useful to the public.

Such advantages has a state of wealth and prosperity : yet it is a state surrounded with such snares, and exposed to such temptations, as are the most apt to stifle the admonitions of prudence, and smother the cries of distress. Enticing pleasures attend the rich man's call wherever he moves ; power and popularity court his ambition ; sensual delights solicit his depraved appetites ; and parasites are ever at hand, by flattery and delicacies, to add fuel to the fire, till his substance is consumed, or life exhausted. Amid this hurry and disorder of the passions, his reason will be neglected, till he is in danger of forgetting his Creator, and despising his poor fellow-creature ; till he can neither listen to the whispers of conscience, suggesting to him his duty, nor to her reproof for the violation of it.

From considerations of this nature, the wisest and most thinking part of mankind have generally allotted true happiness to the middle state
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of life.—Hence Agur prays, *Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*—

And hence are opened to us the full purpose and meaning of our blessed Saviour in the parable before us. Possession of wealth was not the rich man's crime, any more than poverty the poor man's merit. The patience and resignation of Lazarus, and the rich man's forgetfulness of God and his religion, laid the foundation of infinite disparity in their future allotments: and according to these moral differences only, are we to understand the proportion of their respective torments and comfort to be regulated in that state, where all inequalities were adjusted.

Now if this, from a view of the whole extent of human being, be a fair representation of what we are to hope and fear, in the final event of things; what other argument can be required against the neglect or misapplication of the talents committed to our trust? What other motive necessary to enforce a liberal and prudent distribution of the good things wherewith ourselves

selves are blessed? Each day of our lives reads us a lesson of the fleeting condition of all earthly enjoyments, and the volatile nature of riches and power. How absurd then to be over-anxious to acquire what we are not sure of enjoying a moment! How mad, to apply what must be of a very short duration, to uses pregnant with present mischief, to be succeeded with endless woe!

Whoever considers the abundant provision God has made to supply the wants of his creatures, must see that every creature has a right to as much as will answer the necessary calls of nature to preserve his being; I may add, to give him some tolerable degree of comfort in it. This claim no introduction of property ought to violate, nor laws of society (except in cases where life and liberty are justly forfeited) abridge. —Thus far, therefore, our charity becomes a debt of justice; every just man will thus far think it his duty to give assistance in a season of distress: but the Christian will go further; he will, as he has been taught, *abound in the grace of liberality*. The Christian religion considers the rich in this world in the character of stewards of God's providence, entrusted only for a time

time with their possessions, and accountable to God for the use of them. A proper or improper disposal of his property will consequently gain his favour, or displeasure. By what measure, it may be asked, ought our *bounty* or *charity* to be regulated? To this question no limited answer can be given. Every man must judge and settle a *proportion* for himself. The *free will* of the giver sets the *real value* on the gift. The *widow's mite* was equally acceptable with the larger gifts of those who threw into the treasury out of their abundance. To every one it must be left to regulate the *distribution of his income*, according to the *just* expectation of those about him, and the *pressing wants* of those *miserable objects* who fall under his notice. What may be *pride and profuseness* in one, is no more than *suitable* to the dignity and wealth of another. The same gift from one hand may be the effect of prodigality, which would hardly excuse another from the imputation of a narrow spirit. Instances of the latter kind are not, indeed, so numerous as the former. A general turn to pleasure, and an emulation in all the ways of extravagance, seem to be the prevailing follies of this age. The shew of *purple and fine*

fine linen, profusion in dress and equipage, in sumptuous fare and pleasurable expence, seems almost to have levelled all distinction. I would not willingly forebode the mischiefs which they threaten. I would rather hope, that an increase of useful charities may have, in some measure, kept pace with our follies, and helped to abate their malignant influence. But certain it is, that a right œconomy in general was never more wanted; nor a recovery of those just distinctions, on which the strength, and beauty, and order of society depend. Infinite would be the advantages arising from due reflections on this subject. Persons in the middle and lower stations of life would avoid many difficulties to which they are now frequently exposed; nay, would be enabled often to contribute to the necessities of others; whilst men of rank and fortune would preserve their order, and not be so often tempted to despise or overlook a poor Lazarus at their gate.

For how barbarous is it to neglect or overlook those who are by nature and grace our equals, only because they are less fortunate than ourselves! Since every creature has a claim to a portion of God's bounty, how shameless must
be

be the cruelty of those, who withhold their bread from the hungry, only to feed their own extravagance! --- Inequalities of fortune and circumstances of life are as unavoidable, as inequalities of understanding and strength, of genius and temper. Were every thing set upon a level to-day, they would be varied again to-morrow. Diversity of the powers and faculties of men's bodies and minds will always create a difference of outward appearances, and make a difference of rank and order necessary to prevent confusion; and that it should be so is evidently the design of Providence. But it may be fairly collected from the goodness of Providence, that no superiority of his blessings should be made the instruments of oppression; the reason of holding an inferior in contempt; or of withholding relief from any creature in the same order of being, only because he has inferior abilities.

For ask the *rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day*, whence are the means whereby he is so much elated, and tempted to despise the beggar at his gate? Was not the shining ore which gilds his palace fashioned by the secret working of Providence beneath in the earth? Was it not

brought to light by human labour, and wrought into shapes of various use and ornament by man's device? Ask, whence the wonderful art whereby the little reptile spins out its bowels into filk? The plant by gradual vegetation forms the linen thread; till both are prepared for the artificer's hand to weave, and become the delicate clothing of the rich and mighty. Is he not obliged to the great Author of nature for the materials? to the industry of man for the ingenious texture? Ask, whence all the sumptuous fare that daily furnishes his table? Does not the rich storehouse of nature produce it all? and the vigilant care of man secure a continual and seasonable supply of it? Does not gratitude then to God and man oblige him to honour God with his substance, and take care that no man suffer by want?—The assistance of men in the lower stations of life is continually wanting to support the state and ease of those who move in an higher sphere: and very hard would it be, if that assistance in return did not entitle them to the rich man's aid in the time of need, or against the ruin of casual distress.

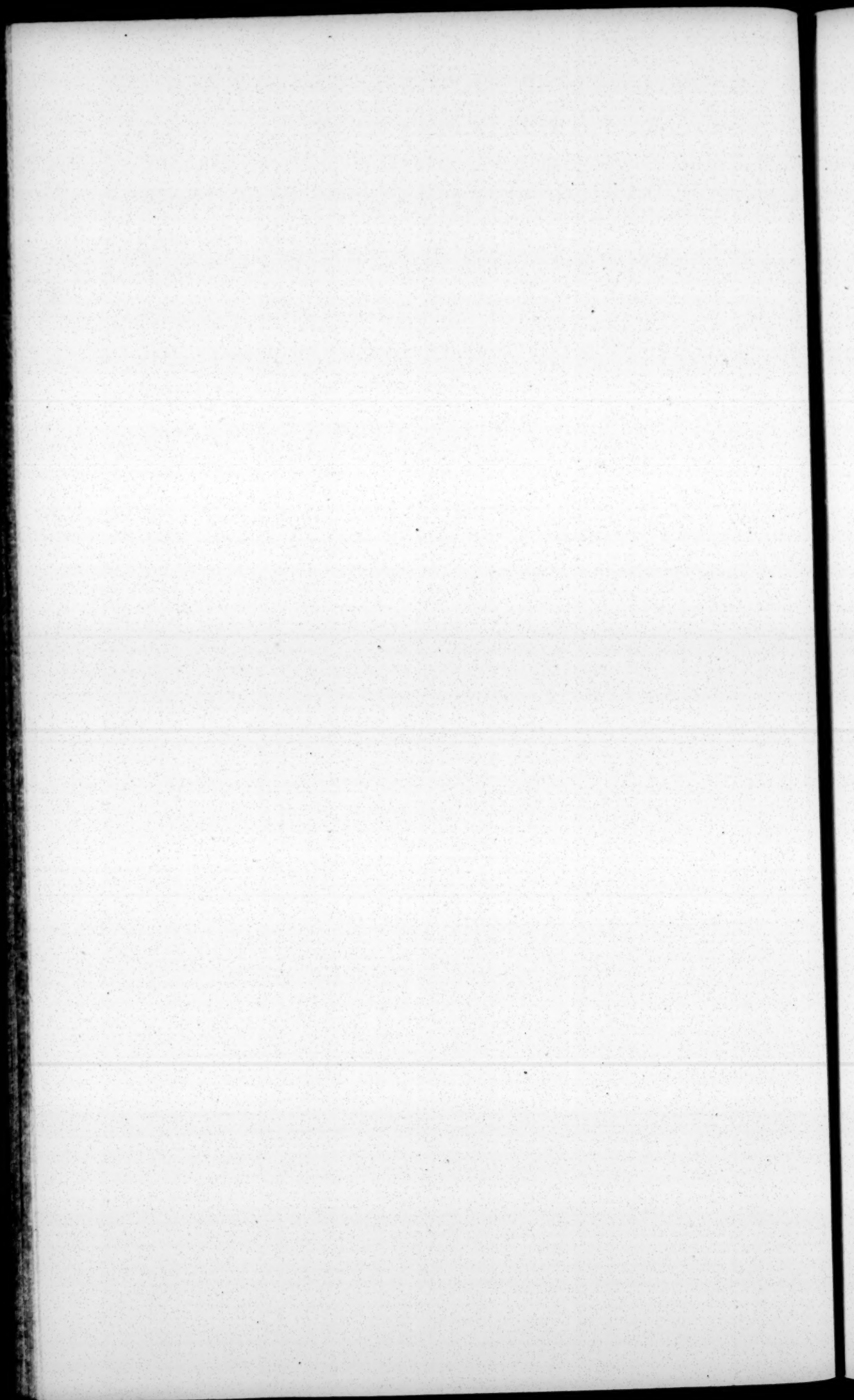
Such a claim on your liberality the present season renders necessary --- a season, in which
numbers

numbers of poor wretches, through an extravagant price of the common necessaries of life, are reduced to the utmost distress. From whence this circumstance arises, I will not pretend to say; but certain it is, that the lower class of inhabitants of this great city labour under very severe difficulties; and are thence become suppliants to your bounty. They are not the idle, clamorous vagrants, with whom (to the reproach of our civil policy) our streets are infested, whom I propose as objects of your charity; but those, whose age and infirmities will not permit them *to dig*, and who *to beg are ashamed*; and those who *have waited all the day long*, and, through the decay of business, *have met with no man to hire them*---the diligent artificer, the faithful servant, and the painful labourer; those who have attended our pleasures in health, and our distresses in sickness, have cultivated our lands, and augmented our commerce. These are really objects of compassion; and these only the contributions of this day are intended to relieve.

The circumstances of the aged and infirm poor throughout this kingdom, but particularly in the trading quarters of this populous city, are, at all seasons, most peculiarly unhappy.

Their numerous wants infinitely exceed the bounds of the charitable contributions (on which they solely depend) which the stated returns of public worship reach out to them. *Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient, that every one of them may take a little.* How greatly then must their distress be aggravated, when the hard hand of necessity deprives them of the least portion of their little pittance! How truly pitiable the industrious poor, children of modest poverty, who, destitute of all employment, have not wherewithal to satisfy the importunate cravings of a numerous family; or to keep alive the lamp of life, sickly through want, and almost expiring in agony! To these, the sons and daughters of affliction, how exquisite would be the regale of *an handful of meal, and a little, although a very little, cruse of oil!* For these, to *them* the delicacies of life, they humbly apply, my brethren, to you; to you, their fellow-creatures, their fellow-christians! They apply—nay, it is Christ, it is God himself that asks your charity. It is he, who, in the person of his Lazarus, lies perishing at your gate. Hasten then to succour and relieve—visit and comfort the sick and needy, ye with whom God hath

hath entrusted the balm of life, to whom he hath given of the dew of Heaven, and the choicest fruits of the earth ! Raise the distressed from the bed of misery. Ah ! let them not sink under the galling yoke of want ! Let not their feeble eyes be lifted up to you in vain ! So may that God, who condescended to take our nature upon him, lived to instruct, died to redeem us, and rose again for our justification — may that God of his infinite mercy *reward you according to your work !* May you receive the choicest blessings of Heaven here, and that joyful sentence, which, at the great day of retribution, will be pronounced by the Father of love and compassion on every faithful steward of Providence---“ *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink.*”



S E R M O N X I.

JOSHUA XXIV. VER. 22.

Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord to serve him: and they said—We are witnesses.

WE have in this chapter a very remarkable passage betwixt the good Joshua and the people of Israel. He recounts some signal instances of God's goodness which their forefathers had seen; and the various divine favours which they, in their own persons, enjoyed, without pretence of merit, industry, or application. This he urges as a reason that they should forsake the worship of idols, and serve the Lord, the only God, in sincerity and truth. But as it was an act of the most awful nature to make a vow unto the Almighty, Joshua puts it to their choice, whether they would serve the Lord or not: whereupon they

make use of the same argument offered to them before, as very strong and engaging; and, without the least hesitation, declare, “that they will serve the Lord.” Joshua, observing their unthinking readiness, seems to discourage their too hasty resolution, and disputes their power; proposing it as an impossibility:—*Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins: if ye forsake the Lord, he will turn against you, and consume you.* But, notwithstanding this, the people persist in their promise; and, as if angry that their power or sincerity should be questioned, repeat it—*Nay, but we will serve the Lord.* Joshua, instead of applauding their zealous adherence, makes them this damping reply—*Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord to serve him: and they said, We are witnesses.*

I would here observe to you, that however extraordinary this transaction between them may appear, certain it is, holy Joshua had nothing more at heart, and in design, than to persuade the Israelites to serve the true God: and his method of treating with them was only to prevent rashness; to prepare them for serious consideration

sideration upon so solemn a covenant ; and to leave them inexcusable and self-condemned, if afterwards they should bow themselves unto strange gods.

This memorable transaction will furnish us with the following observations :

First, that every one ought, and is in *interest* as well as *duty* bound, to serve the Lord, be his *inclination* what it will.

Secondly, That it is a very serious and important act to enter into such an engagement, and by promise consecrate ourselves to his service.

Thirdly, That when we have devoted ourselves to the service of God, we ought to be very careful to fulfil the engagement, and serve him truly all the days of our lives.

The *first* observation is, that every one ought, and is in *interest* as well as *duty* bound, to serve the Lord, be his *inclination* what it will. And this we may prove by the same argument Joshua makes use of, the benefits God hath bestowed upon us. Under this reflection, if we consider whence we are ; that *it is he that made us, and not we ourselves* ; of his infinite goodness he gave us being and faculties to receive satisfaction from it ; since we are blest with perception

ception and understanding, our inward sense will tell us, that we are not self-sufficient, but dependent on the supreme Power, and owe all that we have to the kindness of Heaven. And as God Almighty is the author of all we enjoy, so he is the only proper object of our hopes; the only sufficient security against all our fears. This makes it highly reasonable that we should do our utmost to serve this supreme Cause, this infinitely great and good Being. We cannot but be conscious that the comforts and conveniences, as well as necessities of life, are the kind blessings of his providence. Common gratitude and justice then call on us to praise and adore him. The poor are indebted to him for their preservation and supply, though it be but small: over and above this, the rich are deeply indebted for more plentiful provision. Both being obliged to the mercy of their Creator, nothing can be more monstrous than ingratitude and disobedience. Wherefore are our days prolonged upon earth? To what end is a provoking sinner suffered to continue in the land of the living? Consider this, ye that forget God! Consider, he waits that he may be gracious unto you; that he may recover you
from

from your vices, which lead down to hell ; and that ye may find means to prepare for the glories of heaven. Is not this a sufficient mark of affection and goodness ? Is not this a motive strong enough for acknowledgment ? Each of these surely is a convincing argument for your obedience. It is in itself reasonable and conspicuous, however our passions and appetites may at any time oppose it.

The *second* observation is no less evident—That it is a very serious and important act to enter into such an engagement, and by promise consecrate ourselves to his service.

In this place, I would bespeak your meditations upon the glorious Majesty of the Lord ; upon his authority, justice, and irresistible power. I would remind you, that he is infinitely holy, and infinitely jealous of his honour. Hence you must infer, that *he is greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him.* God Almighty, had it pleased him so to do, might have *obliged* man to obey him by his absolute, uncontrollable authority ; and, in that case, the dreadful consequence of disobedience had been enough to strike an awe upon the mind, and make us tremble for fear of offending

offending him : but since he condescended to *covenanting obligations* ; treating with us upon the equal terms of giving and receiving, surely we should stand in the utmost dread, and, with the most profound respect, offer unto him ourselves, our souls, and our bodies. God is not a man that he will be mocked, when we make or renew our covenant : for though, in pure love to the world, he entered into covenant with man, and, for the merits of Jesus Christ, has promised inestimable blessings to us ; yet, if ye needlessly engage yourselves, profess yourselves Christians merely in compliance with fashion, or the custom of the country it is your lot to be born in, then will his wrath arise, and in his anger *will he turn and consume you*. Remember, moreover, that God had not entered into so gracious a covenant with man, but in consideration of the death and sacrifice of his only Son. God, willing to vindicate his honour, to satisfy his justice, and shew the heinousness of sin, demanded the extremest sufferings that human nature could undergo, in the highest state of perfection it could, in this world, arrive at. On the person, therefore, of his beloved Son did God mercifully transfer this punishment (as no creature

creature could atone for man's offences), and through the intercession of his Son granted he the blessing of a new covenant. No less a compensation had been accepted, no greater could be given. This is truly a mystery of godliness; which, whilst we look into, we ought to adore. Nay, and after this amazing method to redeem mankind, when that in and through the merits of Jesus Christ we were brought into the way of reconciliation, God, knowing the deceitfulness of our hearts, would not accept our bare *assent* and *promise*, to the terms and conditions; but insists upon the circumstances of *words* and *actions*; and that it be done at a solemn time and place, in the presence of people met together as witnesses of his mind and agreement—the design of which was, to engage all our senses in the performance, so as to raise our attention to what we undertake, and lay a strong restraint upon the will. And highly necessary was this rigour in the bond of security, since the honour of God was concerned, and our eternal state depends on it. What I have said will suffice, I hope, to prove to you, that it is a very serious and important act to consecrate ourselves to the service of God; and that it is
not

not to be done, but upon great deliberation and sincerity.

I proceed now, *thirdly*, to shew that when we have devoted ourselves to the service of God, we ought to be very careful to confirm the engagement, and serve him truly all the days of our lives.

When a covenant is confirmed between man and man, a breach on either part brings a greater reproach and punishment with it, because it is the only foundation they have to depend on in their expectations from each other. But, in the covenant between God and man, nothing can be more inexcusable and desperate than falsehood and insincerity. The case supposed under this head is matter of fact. We have devoted ourselves to the service of the Almighty, and at our *baptism* did vow perpetual obedience to him. This will ye all confess; and, when reasoned with upon it, seem to glory in the privilege of being Christians. Well may ye do so, being thereby freed from the imputation of original sin, and made heirs of the kingdom of heaven. But while we think on the blissful state of our redemption, let us not, through our negligence, lose the invaluable blessings purchased for us.

It

It is truly a *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*: not to save them of necessity, but to make their endeavours (if sincere) effectual to that end. It is not enough to say, *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again*: it were better he had not died, if we die not also, *unto sin, and rise again unto righteousness*. God has suspended all the happiness we expect and hope for, on the performance of certain conditions: these conditions we all well know, have all subscribed to, and *are therefore witnesses against ourselves*. If we hope for mercy, we must perform our promise. If we serve sin, we must reap the reward of it. Our Redeemer came not to reward our inactivity; much less for *doing the works he came on purpose to destroy*. Think not to dissemble with, and impose upon, the great Searcher of hearts. If we continue in sin after such solemnity of resolution and assurance, he will not be reconciled to us: *How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Nothing can be more provoking than goodness abused: nothing more dreadful than Omnipotence enraged. And will not his indignation arise
against

against our neglect? Take we heed then that we discharge our duty; otherwise we forfeit all the privileges of the Gospel, and our condition will be much worse than if we had never been baptized. For now we sin against greater light; now we sin against greater mercies: this aggravates our crime, and renders just our condemnation. We cannot complain, with the Heathen philosophers, that we are at a loss to settle the principles of religion; for the *light now shineth in darkness*: the principles of religion are laid before us, indisputable and comprehensive. We cannot excuse ourselves for want of a full information in the several parts and branches of our duty, since the Gospel is so plentifully preached, and so plainly expounded. We cannot pretend infirmity, since God is so near, and so ready to assist our serious endeavours. Under these advantages nothing can extenuate our crime. We are obnoxious to a severer punishment, because we sin against greater mercies. A contemner of the law of Moses died, on conviction, without mercy: of how much greater punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath *trodden under foot the Son of God, and esteemed the blood of the covenant*

covenant an unholy thing? We may be said to be God's chosen people : he has done all that was requisite on his part for us :—the endearments are moving; the obligations extraordinary : disobedience then is monstrous and amazing : there can remain no more but a fearful looking for of judgment. To sin at all, under any circumstances, is blame-worthy : to sin under a just sense of duty, is wretchedly stubborn and perverse. To sin against all means of grace is vile ingratitude, and profane contempt. But to sin against our baptismal vow and promise, is something more : it is to deal treacherously with the Lord ; *the Lord who is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. Better, far better, that we had never been baptised, yea, rather, that we had never been born.* If it should please him to inflict on us the punishments he denounced on the breach of that covenant he had made with the Israelites ; that *our names be blotted out from under heaven, and our whole land be brimstone, salt, and burning*—if in such a terrible visitation (which may he mercifully avert from us) any should say, *Wherefore hath the Lord done this unto our land? What meaneth the heat of*

this great anger? God himself hath given the answer, *Then shall men say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers.*

I shall close all with some useful inferences from what has been said.

First, Since every one ought, and is in interest bound, to serve the Lord, be his inclination what it will; this shews us the excellency of the Christian religion, which makes our duty and our interest the *same*. The proper use we are to make of this is, “heartily to
“thank our heavenly Father, that he hath call-
“ed us to this state of salvation, through Jesus
“Christ our Lord:” and to govern ourselves in all our actions agreeably to his holy institution.

Secondly, Since the Christian dispensation is the *last* (the *last*, because no greater ransom can be paid for us), we can have no hopes if we die impenitent. This is a very serious and interesting consideration; a consideration that ought to make an impression of terror upon us. On the other hand, we have the most powerful engagements to apply ourselves to the service of God; because he will reward our obedience with forgiveness of sins, and eternal happiness.

happinefs. This, one would think, should work upon our affections. So far it has wrought, as to bring us to the profession of Christianity, and the promise of its practice: what is required more of us is, that we be Christians indeed. To enforce this further, know and confider that God is infinitely holy, and that *without holinefs no man fhall fee him*. Know alfo and confider, that he is the great Searcher of hearts, and cannot be impofed on by the moft folemn falfehood, a pharifaical look, or the moft artificial form of godlinefs. Refolve we then to worship with finglenefs of heart, and to obey him with the utmoft diligence.

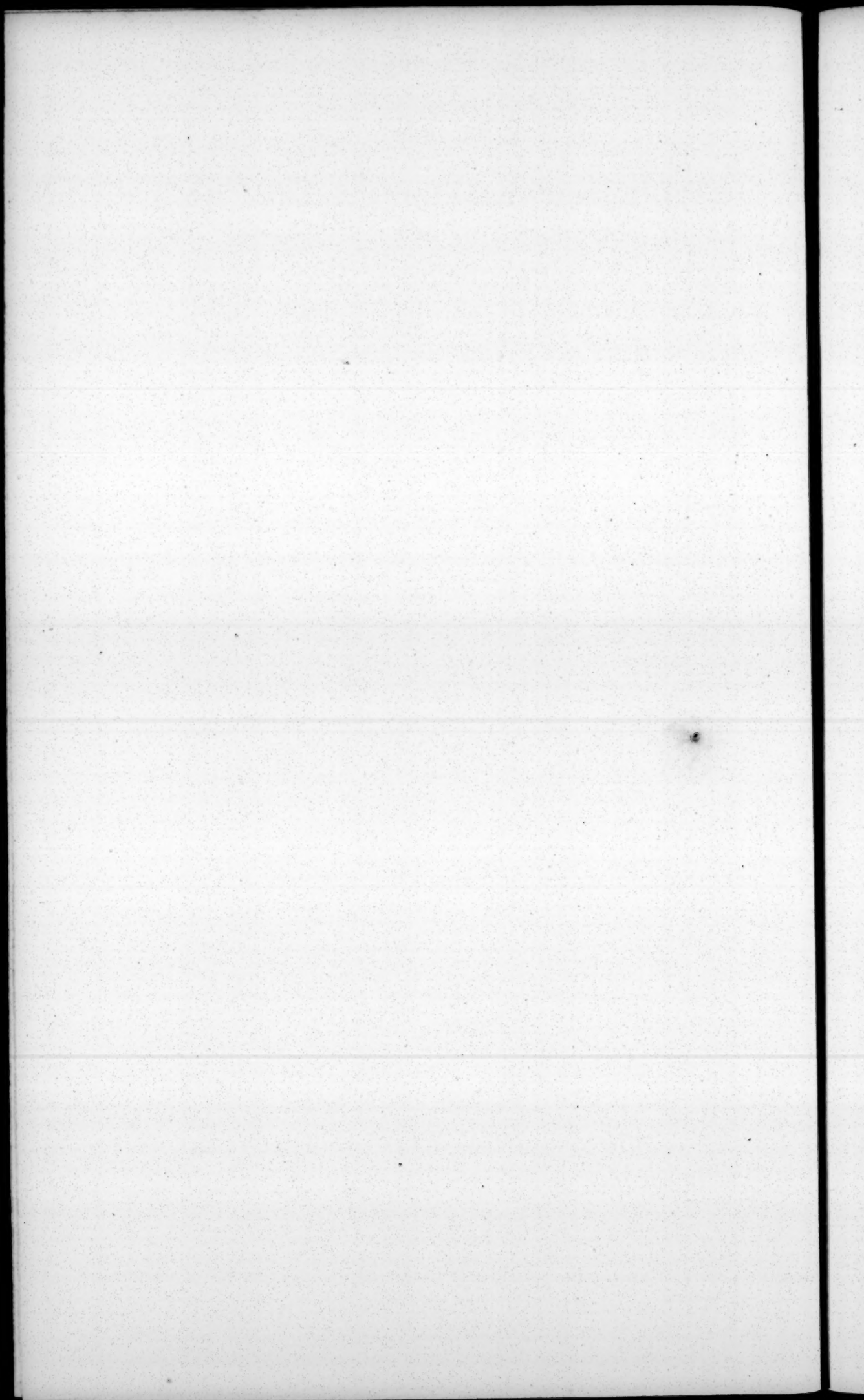
Laftly, God Almighty is willing that all men fhould be faved; and all men, certainly, are willing to receive falvation. God, to fhew his willingnefs, has propofed the moft eafy terms: we, to fhew ours, have accepted and promifed to fulfil them. Can we then be fo weak and extravagant, as to imagine the bare defire of heaven, without any other means, will obtain it? Thus reasoning (and, I think, very much aright), what can we fay whilft we continue to do evil? Confcience is *condemned by her own witnefs*; and the fenfe of it lies gnawing upon

the guilty breast. The answer from *within* must cause shame *without*; and whilst the wicked man cannot vindicate, he torments himself. So miserable a being is he at present. But what will his condition be, when he has lost the whole world, and is losing his own soul? What excuse shall he make in the day of equal retribution; when *by his words he shall be justified, and by his words be condemned?* What plausible apology, before the judgment-seat of Christ, *unto whom all hearts be open, and from whom no secrets are hid*; where we must all receive according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil? There will be no noisy or vain amusements, as in this life, to raise men up to an inconsiderate flow of spirits; no *wine of astonishment* to stupify the senses, and drown the reflections of our former follies. There can be no hypocrisy, no sophistry, no evasion; but conscience will come forth very faithfully under full conviction, and charge every the least error of our lives upon us. *There shall we be witnesses against ourselves, that we chose unto us the Lord to serve him*; and our reason will assure us, that the service required of us was but a reasonable service. What strange unspeakable

speakingable confusion shall we then be in, when the old companions of our debaucheries shall gnash their teeth against us; when we have nothing to offer in our own behalf; no reasons to urge why sentence should not be pronounced against us! when, if we look *inward*, there will be nothing to comfort, or encourage us: if we look to men and angels, they will be convinced of the justice of God's proceedings: if we look unto the Son, to whom all judgment is committed, what agonies shall we suffer, to see him who died to redeem us, who interceded for us at his Father's right hand, now sitting with power and great glory, our incensed judge! Out of his, and out of our own mouths shall we be condemned, and cast out into endless misery.

On what I have now said, I earnestly conjure every one of you, very seriously, very frequently to meditate: and may God Almighty bless your meditations to his glory, and your eternal salvation! Amen.

Now to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, glory, power, might, majesty and dominion now and for ever.



S E R M O N XII.

I THESSALONIANS, CHAP. V. VER. 16.

Rejoice evermore.

AMONGST all the prejudices and scandals which have been levelled against the Christian Religion, none have proved more fatal to it than those which represent it as an unreasonable, unpleasant institution. It seems to be the design of too many among us, thus impiously to traduce the God of truth, to put a false construction upon the laws of Heaven; to bring Christianity into disrepute by moulding it up into some hideous form, and making that an insupportable burthen, which our blessed Saviour has pronounced to be *easy and light*. “Alas!” say they, “it is in vain to attempt it: heaven will never come within

“ our reach : all our labour is vain and fruit-
 “ less : *Let us eat, drink, and die ; venture*
 “ our condition as to the other world, since
 “ it is next to impossibility to secure happiness
 “ there, so very difficult is it to perform the
 “ terms on which it is proposed to us. The
 “ Christian doctrine,” say they, “ is so harsh
 “ and disagreeable ; so burthensome and im-
 “ practicable, that it is the wisest way to let
 “ it all alone, to sit down easy, and spare our
 “ pains, since *in much wisdom is much grief ; and*
 “ *he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sor-*
 “ *row.*”

It is too well known, that this scruple is a
 common practice : as if the service of God and
 man was as incompatible as that of *God and*
Mammon : as if to be religious was to be un-
 happy ; and obedience to the Gospel, slavery.

To prevent therefore such mischievous mis-
 takes about religion, and to endear those who
 are called by Christ's name to the performance
 of what he commands, St. Paul presents her to
 our view in a quite different dress ; and is so far
 from expecting from its votaries a life of sor-
 row and discontent, that, in the words of the
 text, he bids them *rejoice evermore*. The
 words,

words, at first hearing, strike us with a sense of the good disposition of him that spoke them, and confirm to us a sweet indulgence in the whole Christian religion. They establish the truth of Solomon's observation, *That her ways are really ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

How common, therefore, and plausible soever it may happen to be, yet it is certainly a false suggestion against a life of piety and strict virtue, that men are thereby condemned to perpetual sadness, and shut out from all pleasant enjoyments of the world. For certainly no commands in Scripture are more rational in themselves, more practicable in respect of us, than those which so often call upon the righteous *to serve the Lord with gladness, to delight ourselves in God, to be cheerful as becomes the upright of heart*, or, in the words of the text, *to rejoice evermore.*

In speaking to these words, I shall,

First, consider the nature of this joy, and who is capable of it.

Secondly, enquire more particularly how we may preserve this constant cheerfulness and perpetual rejoicing.

First

First then, let us consider the nature of this joy, and who is capable of it. There are some that have no notion of any other joy than that which consists in the gratification of their senses, and pleasing every desire. Tell them of a more spiritual and refined pleasure, such as warms and invigorates the soul, without affecting the bodily senses, and they will look on it only as the offspring of imagination; the effect of a splenetic constitution, an over-heated brain, or enthusiastic fancy. It is easily to be imagined then, when we are commanded to *rejoice evermore*, how greedily the wicked run away with the bare sound of the words, and glory in the command. They have immediately in their view all the extravagant mirth and ridiculous gratifications, such as sense alone prompts them to, or wild lust suggests. They think that this gives them a licence to sin, and to commit all manner of iniquity with greediness. Whereas before they lay under some restraint, and durst not lay the reins upon the neck of their passions; they have now a prescription for it, and may do it by authority; may run into every sensuality, and, without the least regret, taste of every thing that offers itself

itself to their acceptance, under the notion of pleasure.

But, alas ! all such *rejoicing* as this is not only forbidden every Christian, but does not so much as deserve the name of *rejoicing*. It is not the pretended jollity of the drunkard, the boasted raptures of the lewd, or the loud laughs of the profane wit, that have any title to this joy. It is not so much an outward gaiety and briskness of temper, as an inward serenity and cheerfulness of mind. It is a spiritual exultancy of the soul, arising from the consideration of having done one's duty, and behaved one's self *void of offence towards God and towards men* ; in having *lived soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*. It is, as the Apostle speaks, *to rejoice in the Lord, not in the world, nor in any thing which that can afford*. It is a joy in the Holy Ghost ; an inward peace of conscience, that passes all understanding, all conception, as well as expression. *Our rejoicing is this*, says St. Paul : *the testimony of a good conscience ; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation here in the world*.

The soul is of a spiritual nature, and divine
extract ;

extract; spiritual pleasures, therefore, are most suitable and agreeable to it. For this reason it is, that though sensual delights vanish in the enjoyment, those that are more refined, and chiefly affect the soul, never fade, but always continue fresh and verdant; are permanent, like the immortal spirits wherein they dwell, and like the eternal objects upon which they are fixed.

So that it is the good Christian alone that has any real occasion to rejoice. *They that love thy name*, says the holy Psalmist (that is, that delight in God's commandments), *shall rejoice, and be glad in thee*. They shall be so far from suffering, so far from living in torment, for their piety, that they shall be out of the power of sorrow; shall never feel a storm within their breast, never be harassed with that discontent which ever haunts and molests the wicked; but, in imitation of the blessed angels above, shall always find some fresh occasion for praise and thanksgiving. For religion is that inexhaustible fountain, from whence do continually flow *such delicious streams as refresh and make glad the city of God*.

From hence we may easily gather, that such rejoicing is the genuine effect of living in the
daily

daily exercise of piety and virtue ; that to *live* so and *rejoice* are one and the same thing ; that when St. Paul exhorts his Thessalonians to this perpetual duty of rejoicing, he does, in effect, exhort them to continue in a constant and uninterrupted course of *holiness*, *without which no man shall see the Lord* with delight here, nor with comfort hereafter ; and may be supposed to address himself to them in the following manner :

“ My beloved Thessalonians ! as you are
“ fellow Christians with me, I entreat you to
“ be dejected at nothing which may befall you
“ in this life. Remember whose you are, and
“ what is your profession. Never shew such a
“ fondness for the world, as to be cast down or
“ disheartened at whatever accident may possibly
“ surprise you in your passage through
“ it. No, my brethren, take care, in the
“ first place, to do no wicked thing that
“ may trouble your spirits, or damp your joy :
“ lead a good life and keep a good conscience,
“ and you may be always cheerful and well
“ satisfied ; continually regaling upon *that perpetual feast*. If you do your duty as Christ
“ enjoins you, you may defy hell and the
“ world ;

“ world; nothing shall be able to dispossess you
“ of your pleasure; but, as becomes men of
“ your profession, you will *rejoice evermore.*”

And, O that there was such a mind in us!
*that we would walk worthy of the vocation
wherewith we are called!* Then should nothing
break our rest, or interrupt our happiness: our
souls would be buoyed up with the anchor of
hope and confidence, till at length we arrive at
that haven of security, where there is *fulness of
undisturbed joys and pleasures* for evermore.

Having seen the nature of this joy, and who
is capable of it, I proceed, in the *second place*,
to enquire how we may preserve this constant
cheerfulness, and perpetual rejoicing.

There are many things that naturally tend to
serve this design—such as a frequent survey of
God’s attributes, of all his works, particularly
that first and great one of our creation; a fer-
vency and continuance in prayer for what we
want, and a grateful return of praises and
thanksgivings for what we have received, with
many others which I shall not now recount: I
shall only, at present, insist on these following,
which are principally conducive to that end.
And,

First,

First, That we may preserve this constant cheerfulness, let it be our chief care to maintain peace of conscience. As this, in its own nature, tends to exhilarate and enlighten the soul; so, doubtless, the preserving it clear and unblemished, will certainly continue to us that most desirable felicity. When all is peaceable and quiet within, our outward behaviour will correspond with it; and a conscience not harassed nor wasted by any wilful sins, will prove a perpetual spring of delights, flowing in upon the soul. But,

Secondly, Another means to preserve this joyful temper of mind is, frequently to meditate upon the great things our blessed Lord has done and suffered for us; and, with an eye of faith, to look unto the holy Jesus, so wisely, so wonderfully going through all the parts of our redemption. His life, death, resurrection, and ascension are subjects we can never meditate upon too often; and, doubtless, the serious consideration and pious reflection upon each of these particular acts of love, must have this effect upon every one that is worthy to be called by his name.

For this purpose, then, let us look back upon
the

the deplorable condition of lapsed Adam ; who had forfeited all pretensions to future happiness himself ; but not only so, but by his disobedience brought sin into the world ; involved his posterity in his guilt ; by this means debasing our natures, rendering them vicious and corrupt, of consequence making us outlawed to heaven, and inheritors of nothing but hell and misery. Then let us contemplate the infinite goodness and mercy of God in Christ, in contriving such miraculous ways for our deliverance out of that slavery, and worse than Ægyptian bondage, by sending his beloved Son into the world, that through him we might be reconciled to his offended majesty, and made capable of as great, or greater happiness than if we never had offended ; and then let us see what room we can find for sorrow or discontent. He came down from heaven that he might bring us thither ; and, by his most holy life and doctrine, has directed us in the way that leads to life eternal. Let us view him in his last agonies upon the cross ; his blood shed, and his body broken ; suffering all the extremity of pain, which the wit of men could invent, or malice inflict. Perhaps such a doleful and tragical scene
might

might work upon our passions, and melt us down into tears; but yet, at the same time, the consideration, that by *his stripes we are healed*, that by his blood we are cleansed, and that by his death we shall live, will revive our drooping spirits, and fill our souls with unspeakable transport and substantial delight.

Again—Let us reflect upon the benefits of his resurrection; that he is *the first-fruits of them that slept*; that we shall not lie for ever in the dark chambers of the grave; that the scattered particles of our bodies shall, by the same divine Power that first formed them out of the dust of the earth, be reunited, and again animated by our souls, and be made capable of an eternal subsistence in most perfect happiness; and *be made like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*. Such reflections will administer true joy to our souls; and *that joy no man can take from us*. But to proceed a step farther—What can be more exhilarating than to think that he not only died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, but continually intercedes for us at God's right hand for the pardon of our sins, the acceptance of our prayers,

and relief of our necessities; *that though we were sometime afar off, we are now no more strangers, but fellow citizens of the household of God; and, through him, have boldness and access to the Father.* Are we then laden with our sins? Are we struck with the arrows of the Lord? Are we afraid of his judgments? How comfortable is the remembrance that *God delights in mercy more than sacrifice*—that he is not willing that any should perish—that he breaks not the *bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax*—but, through Christ, favourably accepts of the very first motions of a return to him! How does it glad the soul that we have an Advocate with the Father; an Advocate that pleads strongly in our behalf! Who need fear prevailing when such a friend makes application; whose remaining scars of what the nails and spear had made, are themselves silent supplicants, and he that bears them an irresistible intercessor? Say, faithful Christians, does not this minister true comfort? Surely it must make the *broken bones rejoice.* But let us further reflect upon those great assistances he affords us by the plentiful effusion of the blessed Spirit. We are not able to guide ourselves; and therefore
God

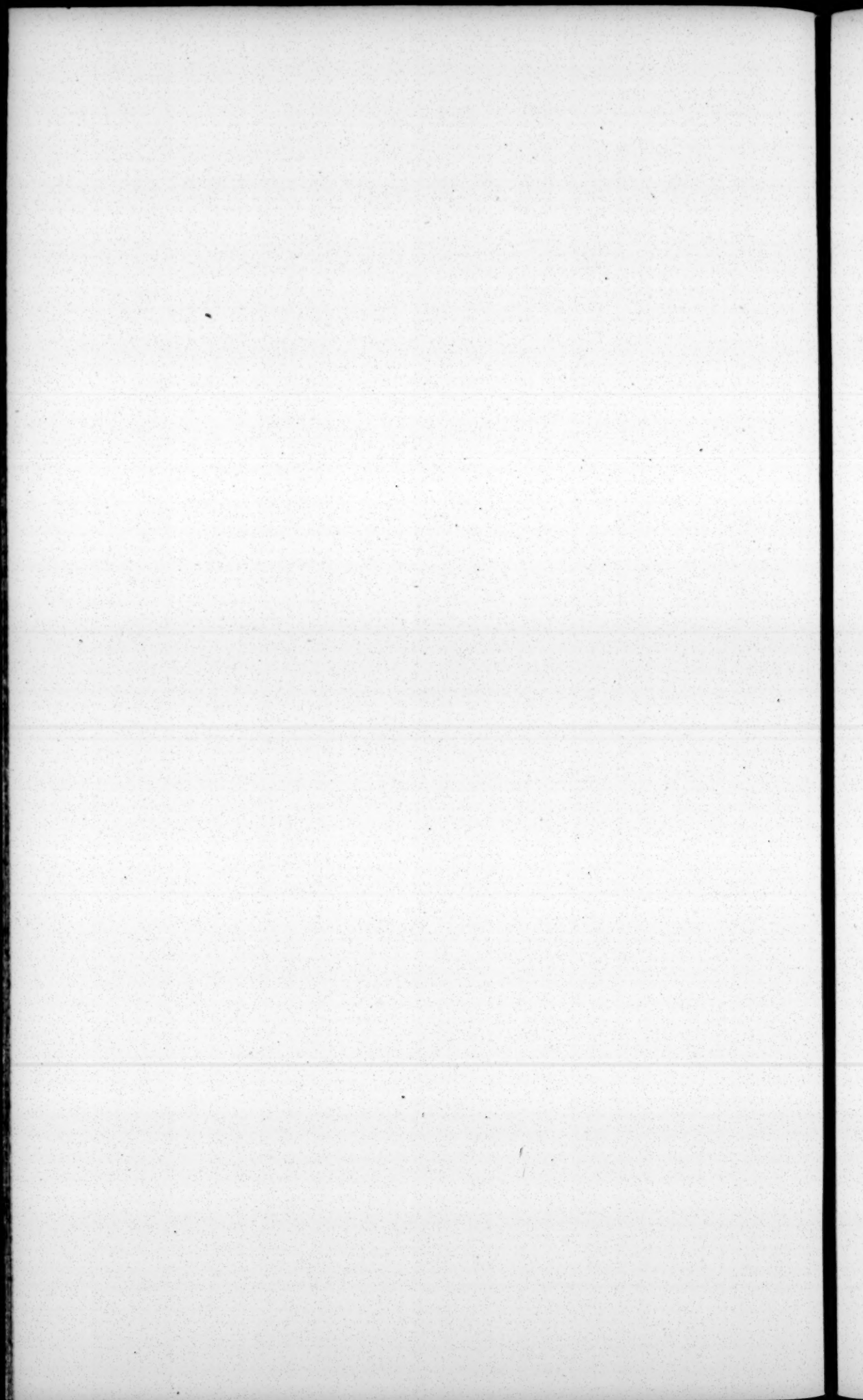
God mercifully gives us his grace to lead, direct, and govern us, according to his good pleasure. It is he that begets in us an holy, generous confidence, and speaks peace to his people. In short, in him we have all that is beneficial, all that we can desire. Now if these, if joy and peace are the effects of the Spirit, how can we be uneasy under its dispensation? How can the *children of the bride-chamber* mourn, how can we be supposed to lament, while under the influence of such divine consolation?

Lastly. Another source of joy to a good man is, the steady belief of a Providence. Man, we know, is a very feeble, impotent creature: without the shelter of a Providence, without the assistance of an higher nature solicitous for our protection, how miserable, how disconsolate would be our condition! But if we believe and acknowledge that there is a chief, omniscient, omnipotent Superintendant, in whose disposal are all events, this must erect our minds, and fortify our spirits. This is an antidote against all trouble and uneasiness, to reflect, that there is no such thing as chance, but that all things are directed by a wise and good God, and will, in the end, certainly work together

for good to us, how unaccountable soever they may now appear. Can a man be dejected, who has the Almighty God for his safety? What room is there for sorrow in that soul that lives under his immediate influence and presence? How glad are we when we have a friend to have recourse to in all cases, one that is willing and able to do us good! What ineffable satisfaction must it be then to the good Christian, to be assured that in all events God will be his friend—that nothing does, or can befall him, without his permission and superintendence—that he will *never suffer him to be tempted above that he is able to bear; and will, with the temptation, also make a way for him to escape!* In the shadow of thy wings, says holy David, *will I rejoice.* The royal Psalmist seems much refreshed, when employed in such becoming thoughts of God; and breaks out into a strain of spiritual exultancy—*The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusteth in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart danceth for joy, and in my song will I praise him.* And, in pursuance of this belief, he exhorts every one to the same temper; to raise up their affections with the utmost triumph and adoration. *The Lord is King, says he, let the earth*

earth rejoice; yea let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.

I might now proceed to take a more particular view of the different dispensations of Providence, the variety of fortunes which men are exposed to in this world; and shew you what an influence a firm belief that there is a supreme Governor and Dispenser of all things, ought to have upon a good man, both in his prosperous and adverse state. But I shall reserve this for the subject of another discourse.



S E R M O N XIII.

I THESSALONIANS, CHAP. V. VER. 16.

Rejoice evermore.

IN my former discourse on these words, after I had shewn the unreasonableness of the clamours and prejudices raised against the Christian Religion, I proposed to consider,

First, The nature of this joy, and who it is that is capable of it.

Secondly, To enquire more particularly how we preserve this constant cheerfulness and perpetual rejoicing.

The sum of what has been already said upon the *first head* is this—That this joy being of a spiritual nature, and too refined to be comprehended by the gross conceptions of sense, is only to be found in the good man's breast; that piety and alacrity are nearly allied, and insepara-

bly united ; and that therefore it is as much our duty to *rejoice evermore*, to bear up with cheerfulness and complacency in all conditions of life, as it is to be good and virtuous. For should a good Christian put on a dejected look and melancholy countenance, should he always *bow down his head like a bulrush*, and live in one continued scene of sadness and austerity, he would do great prejudice to the interest of religion; which every one is obliged, as much as in him lies, to recommend and support. Men will be much more averse to it than they are, when, by such strange deportment, he gives them reason to imagine, that it is wholly made up of rigours and severity; that, to embrace it, a man must *go into the house of mourning*, and, for the future, bid an eternal adieu to the least moments of pleasure. When once such an evil report is spread about religion, it is no wonder that it loses ground, and gains but few profelytes. How will it deter those from embracing it whose resolutions were sincere ! and what a plausible excuse will it afford those who never intended it ! We should, therefore, think ourselves obliged, by the cheerfulness of our looks, to speak the sincerity of our minds ; shew that we are under no slavish fear,
and

and tormented with no remorse; but that we are possessed of that solid and substantial peace which transcends our capacity, and passes our understandings: in short, by the innocent freedom of our outward behaviour, to discover to the world what a Master we serve; that *his service is perfect freedom, his yoke easy, and his burden light.*

I proceeded, *secondly*, to enquire how we might preserve this constant cheerfulness and perpetual rejoicing. And this I told you might be done, *first*, by maintaining peace of conscience: *secondly*, by frequently meditating on the great things our blessed Lord has done and suffered for us: *thirdly*, by living in a steady belief of a Providence. This I but just entered upon, and only shewed in general how naturally this faith elevates the mind of man, and invigorates his spirits.

I now go on, as I proposed, to take a more particular view of the different dispensations of Providence, the variety of fortunes which men are exposed to in this world; and shew you what an influence a firm belief that there is a supreme Governor and Dispenser of all things ought to have

have upon a good man, both in prosperity and adversity.

The superintendency of Providence may, indeed, seem needless to some, whilst men bask in the sunshine of prosperity: and at that season, too true it is, God seldom has a place in their thoughts. They *eat, drink, and are merry*; enjoy all the blessings and comforts of life, without so much as reflecting from whence they come, or looking up to the bountiful hand of their liberal benefactor. But this is but a trifling joy; a very inconsiderable satisfaction: it is earthly, sensual, and brutish. Would such but call in the assistance of their reason, it would soon declare how very trifling the value of worldly prosperity is, if there were no Providence; not only from the uncertainty of the possession, but from the nature of the thing itself. For what satisfaction can the comforts of life afford a considerate man, if they are merely the result of chance, or an indiscriminate cause? But, on the other hand, if he regards them as gifts and favours of a wise and a good God, then, and then only, are they comfortable indeed. This is the satisfaction a good man enjoys from temporal blessings. It
arises

arises from the contemplation of the liberal bounty reached out to him by the hands of his good Providence, who has promised to make those who rely on him, objects of his care. Upon the receipt of every new blessing, the good man is full of thankful acknowledgments; and, with hands and eyes lifted up towards heaven, gratefully confesses with the Psalmist—*The eyes of all things look up unto thee, O Lord! Thou givest them their meat in due season; thou openest thine hand, and fillest with thy blessing every living thing.* He doubts not but he will still punctually feed him with food convenient for him; and, to supply his necessities, continue to him the plentiful use of his good creatures; and, on this hope, travels through life with cheerfulness and pleasure.

But suppose the scene of affairs immediately changed; suppose him on a sudden plunged from the height of happiness and plenty to the depth of want and misery; from a state of perfect health, thrown upon a bed of sickness; from ease and indolence called to suffer for the sake of Christ. Though these are severe trials, and hard to be borne by flesh and blood, yet the thoughts from whence they come, and for what reasons

reasons they may be allotted him, not only keep him from sinking under the heavy burden, but are, in some measure, a comfort and refreshment to his soul.

Is he reduced to poverty? that can never shake him: his piety raises him beyond the reach of fortune. He knows that *man does not live by bread alone*, and that it is but food and raiment he has any necessary occasion for. He acquiesces in the wise dispensations of an overruling Power; and thence satisfies himself that his loving Father has only deprived him of what probably might have been injurious to him; and that through his poverty (which also may be a trial of his faith and patience) he designs that *grace should much more abound*. He further recollects, that the tenure of his possessions was very uncertain; he had not the least property in them; they were only lent him; and that therefore he ought cheerfully to resign them when the proprietor remands them; and gratefully acknowledge his indulgence in the use of them. Supported by such considerations, the good man dutifully resigns up all in the words of holy Job — *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the*
Lord

Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord! If he has any concern about him, it is not so much for himself as for others: it is because his hand is shortened and restrained from doing public good; that he is not full enough to overflow the neighbouring vales, and refresh them, as well as himself, with his bountiful streams; that he has not fortune enough to keep pace with his pious wishes, and that all mankind cannot profit by him.

Is he cast on the bed of sickness? what comfort and refreshment does the belief of God's providence afford him! Whatever be his sickness, he considers it as a visitation from God, the Lord of life and death; as the correction of a tender parent, who will sanctify his affliction unto him, and, as a reward of his obedience, either restore him to his former health, or take him out of the misery of a sinful world. This is the source of his joy; a joy which the world cannot give.

I would not here be understood to say that religion changes the nature of afflictions, and renders its professors insensible. Afflictions, doubtless, are grievous; what flesh and blood cannot but feel: but this I say, that such pious reflections

reflections will revive the drooping soul, and inspire it with a pleasure much exceeding the pains of the body. The dejected Christian may at any time check himself, in the words of the Psalmist, and, with this holy charm, repress all insurrections of trouble and uneasiness—*Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God, for I will yet thank him who is the help of my countenance, and my God.*

Is he called, after the example of his great master and his apostles, to suffer persecution or martyrdom, for the sake of his religion? even in such a fiery trial, a Christian has somewhat whereof to rejoice. The temptation, indeed, is strong; but the satisfaction of dying for a good cause, the consideration of *the joy that is set before him*, together with the promised cheering influences of God's spirit, take away the sting and terror of the cross, strip persecution of its ghastly forms, and reconcile all the difficulties of a despicable life, or a painful death.

But there is yet another part of religion, most of all apt to cheer and delight the mind, and that is, a fixed attention to the great rewards of the other world, which Christ has purchased for, and
promised

promised to, all that love and endeavour to please him. To consider that we are not left destitute in this world, but that we are under the guardianship of an all-careful Providence, is a truly reviving reflection: yet were it not for the promise and expectation of the next life; the waiting for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, a melancholy gloom would overshadow all, and the best Christian would be of all men the most miserable. It would not be enough to be assured of not going to a place of torment, unless, at the same time, we were secure of passing through the Valley and Shadow of Death, to a place of endless joy. The very thoughts of sinking into a state of annihilation, or dropping into nothing, would strike a damp on all our enjoyments. Nothing less than immortality can keep up our spirits, or be relished by our thirsty souls. Convinced of a resurrection to eternal life, man is happy; and nothing but fruition can exceed his happiness. For whereas faith is only a general assurance that such and such pleasures are the undoubted portion of every pious man; hope more particularly applies this to ourselves, and, in soft whispers to the soul, tells the good man that he has an actual interest therein;

therein ; that his name is writen in heaven ; that he is enrolled in the book of life.

Whence then can sorrow come ; or how can sadness, that child of darkness, insinuate itself into that soul which has before it such a noble prospect ? is conscious that he is an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ ? This anchor must support up the Christian under the greatest pressure of all temporal calamities. To him that hath this hope, a crown of thorns must fit as easy as a diadem : on him the boisterous waves of this troublesome world must spend their idle rage in vain, whilst he has in view such an haven of rest and happiness. He who has before him the blessed prospect of an heavenly Canaan, cannot but cheerfully travel through the wilderness he may meet with by the way.

But, besides these deep and inexhaustible springs of joy, there are millions of others, as it were rivulets and branches, which all likewise produce and occasion delight ; a few of which I shall just mention, and conclude. How sweet is the contemplation of the rich bounty of God in the creation of the world ; and in producing so goodly a frame, so copious a store of things, with a special regard to our sustenance
and

and accommodation ! All the works of God praise him, and are fit materials to employ, elevate and transport the mind. The disciples of our blessed Lord pleased themselves in surveying and admiring the outward structure of the temple : but, alas ! what is that to the stupendous creation of heaven and earth ?

Again—If the works of God affect the soul with pleasure and admiration, what must the contemplation of God himself do, who is infinite perfection, therefore incomprehensible ? Such glory is too wonderful and excellent for our apprehension : we can only bow down and worship. The soul is at a loss where to gaze, and where to commend : not only we, but angels and archangels are incapable of surveying the Deity, however with joy they surround his courts, and fill those bright mansions with zealous acclamations and endless hallelujahs.

Again—What a real pleasure does the good man feel in works of charity ; in distributing his alms among his distressed brethren ; in *clothing the naked, in feeding the hungry, and in visiting the fatherless and widows in their afflictions* ! How comfortable is the reflection on the vast and disproportionate retributions which

are promised to such a godlike temper of mind! How inexpressibly pleasing the sensations on every act of benevolence!

In short, how inconceivably comfortable is prayer! the greatest privilege any creature is capable of—to hold correspondence, when we please, with the eternal King of kings! And what unspeakable satisfaction does the believing suppliant enjoy, when he publicly enters God's house, or privately betakes himself to his closet!

Go on then, happy Christians! attend to your high calling, and *serve the Lord with gladness*. See that your *hearts condemn you not*; and then suffer nothing to disquiet or molest you. Be zealous to promote the great cause you are engaged in; and, be the circumstances of your warfare what they will, as becomes faithful soldiers of Christ, *rejoice evermore*.

Now to God the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

S E R M O N XIV.

ROMANS, CHAP. I. VER. 11.

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end that you may be established.

THIS Epistle is supposed to be the last St. Paul wrote before he went to Rome ; and was placed first, either as being written to the imperial city, or for the excellency of the doctrine contained in it. It was written from Corinth, before he had seen the Romans : *For I long*, says he, *to see you* : the reason was, that he might impart to them, or bestow on them, some spiritual gift, according to the custom of the Apostles, by the *imposition of his hands* : *Then laid they their hands on them* (so the Scripture informs us their usage was), *and they received the Holy Ghost*. The end of his imparting

this gift to them was, that they might be established, or confirmed. *For I long to see you, &c.*

These words I shall apply (as the generality of commentators have done) to the rite or ceremony of *confirmation*; and shall say something, *first*, of this ceremony in general; *secondly*, enquire into its nature and signification; from which will naturally arise some useful exhortations.

First, then, of this ceremony in general.

That *laying on of hands* is a mere ceremony, having nothing of intrinsic goodness to recommend its use to us, is acknowledged by all: and yet this ceremony, indifferent as it was in itself, was used by our blessed Saviour on several occasions, and practised by the Apostles in many instances. To preserve good order and decency, the establishment of ceremonies is highly necessary; and whatever prejudices some may have against them, they are rather to be imputed to indiscretion, or perverseness, than to the practice of things in themselves indifferent. Our blessed Lord was so far from scrupling to use lawful and innocent rites, that he adopted two *Jewish ceremonies* into the Christian doctrine: the one from *baptizing of proselytes*; the
other

other from the *post-cænium of the Paschal Lamb*: neither of which was enjoined by the *Levitical law*; and yet both of these appointed by him, as the lasting and perpetual sacraments of his church. From hence it is evident, that it is not unlawful to appoint rites and ceremonies, so they tend to order and edification. By a word from his mouth, he might have infused his holy Spirit into the hearts of his Apostles: but his infinite wisdom rather chose to join with it that significant ceremony of breathing on them, thereby shewing, that he did, at that instant, immediately from himself convey the Holy Ghost unto them. And, to come closer to our present purpose, had he been scrupulous in such matters of indifference, the *pronouncing his benediction* on the children that were brought to him, had been sufficient; he had never taken *them up in his arms*, and laid his hands *upon them*; using ceremonies burthensome to himself, as well as offensive to others. Without entering any farther into this point, let it suffice to say, that the holy Scriptures do abundantly testify this to be the constant practice of the Apostles, as a proper expedient for decency, and the peace of the church.

I come now, *secondly*, to enquire into the *nature* and *signification* of the ceremony of confirmation.

I need not tell you, that the hand is the member or instrument by which we bestow, or convey, our gifts and kindnesſes to others : and that even nature carries the father's hand towards the head of his child, although, at that instant, he knows not how, or why he does it, when he outwardly prays for, or inwardly wiſhes him a bleſſing.—The eaſtern heathens were not ſtrangers to this cuſtom. *Behold*, ſays Naaman the Syrian, when he went away diſſatisfied with the remedy preſcribed to him, of *washing ſeven times in Jordan*—*Behold, I thought he would ſurely come out to me, and ſtand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and ſtrike, or lay, his hands over the place, and recover the leper.* This ceremony, long before the giving of the law, was uſually joined with paternal benedictions : thus the father of the patriarchs, by prayer, and impoſition of hands, bleſſed the ſons of Joſeph. Under the law, the conſecration of things, or perſons, to the ſervice of God, was, by divine appointment, to be performed by *laying on of hands*. Thus Moſes conveyed to
Joshua

Joshua a part of his government : when he laid his hands on him, Joshua not only received the honour, but the more necessary qualification of majesty, *the spirit of God*. And as blessings, spiritual and temporal, were conveyed by this ceremony, so our Saviour and his Apostles thought fit to retain and use it, when they recovered the sick, absolved penitents, blessed infants, confirmed the baptized, and when they ordained priests and deacons. We, therefore, retaining this primitive institution, may comfortably expect a blessing when this holy office is administered by the hands of the bishops, the lawful successors of the Apostles. The gifts that were conveyed on the administration of this office by the Apostles, were of two sorts, *ordinary* and *extraordinary* : the extraordinary were such as the infancy of the church did then require ; such as *working miracles, speaking strange languages, &c.* The ordinary were, the *enlightening their minds*, inflaming their affections, and endowing them with all the inward assistances of the holy Spirit to strengthen their faith, and inspire their resolutions. The *extraordinary* gifts were of a temporary nature, now no longer necessary : the other will continue till the dissolu-

tion of the world: though no miracles are wrought, we still receive those inward graces and virtues which were signified and demonstrated by those signs; the fruits whereof are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.*—The design then of *confirmation* is this: to take upon ourselves the performance of that covenant which we entered into with God at our *baptism*. *Baptism* is a covenant by which certain conditions are promised to be performed on the part of the person baptized, and certain privileges assured to be conferred on the part of God. Infants being incapable of entering into this covenant, their *sureties*, whose duty it is to instruct them, engage for their promise and performance of them. When then they come to age of discretion, and are well instructed in the nature of that covenant for which their sureties are engaged, if they are desirous to continue to be partakers of the privileges which God has given to the members of the church of Christ, they must, in the presence of God and his church, *solemnly* declare their resolution of performing their part of this covenant, and *freely take upon themselves* the vow which was made
for

for them at their *baptism*. Upon their doing this, the great privileges of baptism are sealed anew, and secured to them, by the *imposition of hands*. “ There are three periods (says an eminent writer, Dr. Clarke), from which I suppose a Christian to begin his religious life—
“ *baptism, confirmation, and repentance*. In those
“ who have been converted from any other religion to christianity, their religious life ought
“ to commence from baptism. In those who
“ have, from their infancy, been educated in
“ the christian religion, their religious life ought
“ to commence from *confirmation*. But for those
“ who have neglected this great and solemn opportunity, or have since fallen into any great
“ and wilful sins, the only remaining time from
“ whence their religious life can be reckoned,
“ is *repentance*.” — *Confirmation* then may be looked upon as the second stage of our christian life; a time when we begin to act for ourselves, and sincerely resolve to put those good principles in practice in which we have been educated. Well would it be for us, if *confirmation* was celebrated now with the same preparation and reverence as in the primitive church. There no one was admitted to be *confirmed*, till he was
well

well acquainted with the principles of christianity, and understood the nature of that vow he was going to take upon himself. And in that age, no one was admitted to the *holy sacrament of the Lord's supper*, till he had been *confirmed*. Thus the Christians of those days passed through a regular course of religious education ; by that they were confirmed in virtue, and *ever ready to give*, on sound principles, *a reason of the hope that was in them*. Well, I say, would it be for us, if that discipline of the primitive church was revived : then that *shameful ignorance*, in which so many Christians live and die, would, in a great measure, be prevented. *Shameful ignorance*, I say ; for, I am well persuaded, thousands live in a fair communion with the church of Christ, and partake of its sacraments, without understanding the common principles of christianity, or the nature of religion in general. They are Christians, because their parents were Christians ; they are of this or that particular church for the same reason ; they have never received any proper instructions, nor given themselves the least trouble to seek them. But these disorders would be prevented by the restitution of primitive discipline : till that be restored, what
can

can be done, but that parents, sureties, guardians, and all who are entrusted with the education of children, double their diligence in *training them up in the way they should go* ; instilling into their tender minds just notions of religion and morality ; the great privileges conferred on them in being *members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of eternal life* : when they have qualified them thus, to bring them to *confirmation*, to receive the consummation of *baptismal grace*, on their promise of obedience ?

I shall close this discourse with some useful exhortations.

First, I would address myself to you, to whom this ceremony of *confirmation* is soon to be administered. And let me intreat you to consider what a solemn act you are going to perform. You are going to appear before God and his church ; and there solemnly to ratify and confirm, in your own persons, what your sureties promised for you at your *baptism*, and call down the blessing of God on your pious resolutions. What action of your lives can be more awful ? Do not look upon it to be, as too many, I fear, do, a mere useless ceremony. It is a most solemn appeal to heaven, and ought not to be

be lightly, wantonly, and inconsiderately undertaken. You are going to profess, that you will renounce *the devil, the world, and the flesh*: to this end affect your minds with a deep sense of the heinousness of sin; and earnestly entreat Almighty God to strengthen your resolution. You are going to profess, that you believe all the articles of the Christian faith: to this end, endeavour to gain a clear and distinct knowledge of those articles, as comprised in your creed. You are going to profess a constant obedience to *God's holy will and commandments*: to this end, be steady in your resolutions, and beseech God to give you his grace to enable you to perform it. When you have been *confirmed*, look upon yourselves (and I would have all to do it, who have been *confirmed*, for to such I now likewise address myself), look upon yourselves as entering upon, or having entered, a new life. Frequently reflect on the promises you have made to God, and the necessity you are under of performing them. Persevere in the constant practice of religion and virtue. Be careful to avoid all temptations to sin. Flee from idleness and bad company, as the greatest enemies to your salvation. Strive to grow in grace, and zealously
p^{re}ss

press forward to perfection : to this end, be particularly careful to attend the great duties of religion ; be instant both in private and public prayer ; and never turn your backs on the table of the Lord. You have all the means of instruction offered you : let not *our ministry be blamed* through your inattention and neglect of them. You will have no excuse for your negligence ; for they who offer to instruct you will be witnesses against you : nay, you will *be witnesses against yourselves*. Few there are, it is to be feared, among us, who *have received this spiritual gift*, I mean, who have been *confirmed*, but who, through their own neglect, have been so unfortunate as to lose those graces they then obtained. In order to recover these, I would exhort you to be diligent and attentive in hearing, reading, meditating, and applying that *word of truth*, which was written by the inspiration of the holy Spirit, *to make us wise unto salvation*. I would exhort you, *secondly*, to be faithful and frequent in receiving the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper ; that heavenly feast which calls down the divine Spirit to our aid, enlightens our minds, inflames our affections, damps the fire of our irregular appetites, and is the most sovereign

fovereign remedy for all the distempers of the soul. If there went such a virtue out of Christ's natural body, when he was upon earth, that great cures were wrought by it (*If I may but touch his garment*, said the woman, *I shall be whole*), what a great blessing must the receiving it in the sacrament bring with it to the devout soul, addressing itself to him with a lively faith, that he is able and willing to heal us !

“ Do thou, therefore, O gracious God, who
“ art the author and fountain of all goodness,
“ give us grace so to hear and read thy word,
“ rightly and duly to apply and make use of
“ all thy solemn rites and ordinances ; and so to
“ pray to and praise thee on earth ; that we
“ may be qualified to receive those unspeakable
“ blessings which thou hast prepared for all thy
“ true and faithful servants from the beginning
“ of the world : grant this, O merciful Father,
“ for Jesus Christ's sake — to whom, with
“ thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and
“ glory, now and for ever.”

S E R M O N X V .

ISAIAH, CHAP. XXXV. FORMER PART OF VER. 4.

*Say to them that are of a fearful heart, "Be strong,
fear not."*

IT is something very remarkable, that, notwithstanding all mankind partake of the same nature, and are descended from the same common parent, yet every individual man has something in the structure and motion of his body, the features and lineaments of his face, and in the air of his countenance, peculiar to himself, and which distinguishes him from all others of his own species: and it is still more observable, that there is as great a diversity in the temper of men's minds, as there is in the frame and constitution of their bodies. This happens not only among natives of different countries,

countries, but even among those of the same nation, and even the same family. One is of a sprightly and volatile temper; rash and forward in any enterprize; careless and improvident of any danger; apt to flatter himself with vain hopes, and easily transported in an excess of joy. Another is, in the expression of the text, *fearful of heart*; dreading the issue of every action; timorous and irresolute in every attempt; sunk and dispirited under every the least prospect of danger, and trembling at every the most distant appearance or shadow of evil.

Though the words before us are more particularly to be addressed to the latter of these; yet, lest what is said to encourage the *fearful* should be misapplied to embolden the *rash*, and harden the *presumptuous*, I shall,

First, Lay before you some of the mischiefs and disorders that arise from the want of *fear*.

Secondly, Some of those that arise from the excess of it. And,

Thirdly, Shall shew, that to live in the *fear of God*, is the most effectual remedy to cure the excesses or defects of all our other *fears*.

As our infinitely wise and good Maker intended every passion he implanted in us for our benefit;

benefit ; so the passion of *fear*, when exerted on a just occasion, and kept within the bounds of reason, is highly necessary and useful ; is instrumental to the preservation of our bodies and souls, to the security of our present and future welfare. *Fear* is, in some sense, in our temporal, as well as spiritual concerns, *the beginning of wisdom*. It discovers itself very early in our natures, and appears in our infancy with the first dawnings of reason. It is a proper counterpoise for the rashness and unweariness of that tender age ; and serves as a pilot instead of reason, while our understandings are too weak to direct our steps. It is of service to us in every stage of life, to awaken our senses, and to alarm our reason. The providence of God has placed this passion in man, to rouse him up to provide for his own safety and welfare. He has placed fear in our bosoms, as a guard, or centinel, over a besieged town, to give notice of any impending danger. Divested of this passion, what a slothful, heedless, unwary creature would man become ! His whole life would be a continued scene of inadvertency and folly ; unprepared for any evil event, unarmed against the surprise of any sud-

den opposition, and unguarded against all manner of danger. His schemes would be formed without deliberation, and carried on without prudence or caution. Unconcerned for every future event, little would he regard his health, his reputation, his fortune, and his morals. Undaunted at the dreadful consequences of riot and debauchery, every lust, every appetite, would he indulge; impair his constitution, hurry on painful diseases, and untimely death. Luxury and prodigality would soon ruin the wealthy, if want and poverty had lost their terrors. Bravery and true honour would soon disappear, if the dread of disgrace and ignominy did not heighten their lustre. Virtue and moral honesty would be but mere names and empty shadows, if the fear of God, the apprehensions of another life, and the dread of the threatened punishments, as well as the natural consequences of wickedness, did not create and influence them. In a word, had not Providence planted in man the rational and well-grounded passion of *fear*, no self-government, no self-preservation, no safety, no prudent conduct in private families, or public societies; no deliberation; no discretion, no foresight or precaution,

precaution, nothing but destruction and misery, anarchy and confusion, could have subsisted in the world.

I come now, *secondly*, to consider the mischiefs and disorders occasioned by an excess of *fear*.

As this passion is one of the strongest, and of the greatest service, when duly regulated, and rightly applied; so it is productive of the greatest evils, when it is too much indulged; and of all other passions the most difficult to be restrained, when too predominant.

As man naturally seeks his own safety, so it is no wonder that the generality of mankind are too prone to give into that passion which was principally and immediately intended to guard their welfare and security. And hence, no doubt, it is, that excess of fear is frequently more destructive than the want of it. Thus the gallant soldier, who bravely dares to encounter his enemy, and undauntedly sustains all the dangers of war, is in much less danger than him who attempts to secure his life by flight and desertion. Our Saviour himself confirms the truth of this observation; that *whoever is solicitous to preserve his life, the same shall lose it.*

it. This will hold true in every sort of fear. Thus the *fear of sickness* (which, when kept within the bounds of moderation, is undoubtedly necessary for the preservation of health) often produces imaginary distempers; and in diseases of every kind, the very apprehension of them, without any other cause, produces effects more fatal than the disease itself.

The passion of fear, when it arises on any occasion, is the cause of strange confusion in the body. The circulation of the blood is suspended, the spirits checked in their excursion, and the heart arrested in its motion; and the whole frame, by frequent fits, or long indulgence of this passion, being thus frequently disordered, and every part hindered in the performance of its office, it must in time wholly corrupt the whole system of the body; nor, when too violent and raging, is it less hurtful to the mind. Other passions may more easily be moderated. *A soft answer will turn away wrath.* Grief may be appeased by condolence. Desire may be quenched by absence. Pity is its own relief. Joy and grief, the stronger they seize us, the sooner they abate, and may be
reasoned

reasoned down into calmness. But *fear* is an incurable disorder : time increases its torments, and enhances its terrors ; absence can afford no relief, since the dreaded object ever haunts the imagination. Though the evil it shudders at is necessarily distant, yet it seems always present. It anticipates its misery, instead of striving to prevent it ; and makes itself its torment, which was intended as a guard against pain. It is ever deaf to the voice of reason ; and though the understanding, amid all the vapours and clouds of darkness, is able to relieve it by its dictates, the will is grown so damp and languid, that it is too faint, too irresolute, to perform it. *Fear*, like Solomon's sluggard, *dreads a lion in the way*. Hence the unhappy objects of this passion are at last plunged into melancholy, into distraction, into despair, into self-murder. By men of such fearful and gloomy dispositions were the notions of *absolute reprobation*, of *fate* and *destiny*, first formed and propagated : and by men of the same temper and complexion are the same vile tenets still embraced. Hence they become not only diffident of themselves, but distrustful of infinite Goodness : this makes them
look

look upon themselves as *vessels of wrath*, created to be miserable, and doomed to destruction; and hurries them to meet their damnation by a violent and untimely death. And even when men's fears have arisen only from temporary evils, an unexpected alarm of danger, or a sudden fright, has often given so violent a shock to the brain, as to startle them into madness, and ever deprive them of their understanding.

Having laid before you the mischiefs and disorders that arise from the excess and defect of *fear*, I proceed, in the

Third and *last* place, to shew, that to live in the fear of God is the most effectual remedy we can apply to prevent our running into either of the extremes.

It is true of every one of the passions, but more especially of *this*, that the more useful it is, when rightly employed, and duly regulated, so much the greater mischief does it produce, when it arises on trivial occasions, or exceeds its due bounds. It exerts itself differently in different constitutions; and the more prevalent it is, the greater virtue does it require to suppress it. Hence *courage* has almost

most appropriated to itself the name of virtue, as that seems to be the master-spring by which all good and virtuous actions are put in motion. Want of courage implies want of *faith* and *trust* in Providence. No sooner had the affrighted disciples awakened their Master, to implore him to save them from the shipwreck, but he reproved them for their unnecessary and excessive fears — *Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?*

God, whose providence implanted in us the passion of fear, to make us provident and watchful for our preservation, is himself more vigilant to preserve us, than we are to provide for ourselves. *By him we have been bolden up ever since we were born; on him we depended when we hanged yet on our mother's breasts: while our senses and fears are asleep, he is about our path, and about our bed, to protect us. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that made the eye, shall he not see every evil that may annoy us? In the multitude of all sorrows, of all dangers without, and all fears within, his comfort only and protection can refresh our souls.*

As God gave us the passion of fear, he alone

is the most proper, and the most reasonable object of it. Every other fear carries with it a plain intimation, that we ought rather *to fear God*. The fear of *pain, sickness, danger, or death*, suggests to us the fear and reverence of that all-sufficient Being, who alone can supply all our wants, in whose hands are the issues of life and death. How did the contemplation of his providence animate and revive the *royal Psalmist*! *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?* A just sense of the attributes of the Almighty ever animates and inspires the good and virtuous. Amid all the dangers and misfortunes which life is daily obnoxious to, he looks up to God as his guide, his comforter, his friend, his guardian, and protector, his father and redeemer. Though he is too blind to foresee, and too impotent to avert, misfortunes, he wants no foresight to conduct him, since he is under the continual inspection of an all-seeing eye: he wants no power, since he trusts in his assistance, whose almighty hand is ever extended in his defence, *and whose strength is made perfect*

perfect in weakness. Such is the confidence which religion inspires ; a confidence, by which we are enabled, like holy Job, that eminent instance of afflicted virtue, amid the severest trials, *to retain our integrity*, and, in spite of all the insults of malicious insinuations, *not to curse God, and die.*

The man, who has no stings of conscience to dishearten him, no guilt to strike a damp on his soul, what can daunt, what can dismay him ? Though the pillars of the earth were shaken, *though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea*, though the whole frame of nature were dissolved, and this world reduced to its original chaos, yet he being well assured he shall survive its ruins, may stand undaunted on the general wreck. Fear is only the effect of a guilty conscience. *The wicked, says Solomon, flee when no man pursueth ; but the righteous is bold as a lion.* If we cannot justify our actions at the tribunal of our own consciences, how must we tremble at every shadow of danger, that may hasten our appearance before the tribunal of God ! Every event is apt to startle and ruffle a mind conscious of its own wickedness ;

the minuteſt accident, *even a ſhaken leaf*, will ſurpriſe and chaſe it: for *wickedneſs*, ſays the ſon of Sirach, *is condemned by its own witneſs*; is always affrighted, and anticipates danger.— Thus Cain, when he embrued his hands in his brother's blood, was afraid that every one he met would ſlay him. Thus Herod, when he heard of the fame of Jeſus, believed him to be John the Baptiſt riſen from the dead, whom he had before murdered for his honeſty in re- proving him. *There can be no ſolid peace to the wicked; they are like the troubled ſea, which cannot reſt.* Fearfulneſs and trembling frequently ſeize them, and *an horrible dread over-whelms them.*

The innocent, on the other hand, *lays him down in peace, and takes his reſt*; he knows that God, on whom he relies, watches his ſlumbers, and *makes him to dwell in ſafety.* As God is the only object of his deſires, ſo is he the only object of his fears. The casualties of life cannot diſturb him, the terrors of ſickneſs diſcompose him, or the horrors of death affright him. An example this, highly worthy our imitation. The life of the innocent and religious teaches

teaches us this great and useful lesson, *to keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right*; for this alone will calm our other fears, *bring us peace, and peace at the last*, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment:—which lesson that we may all learn, and practise, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.